OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE MIDWEST OPEN AIR MUSEUMS COORDINATING COUNCIL

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MIDWEST
Open Air Museums

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Midwest Open Air Museums Coordinating Council

MOMCC FALL CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 3-5, 2011

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Hosted by Historic Point Basse Inc.
At Hotel Mead
Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin

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CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Broom making workshop
Traditional cast iron cooking workshop
Basket making workshop
Cranberry Tour
Wagon wheel rug making workshop
Wood carving workshop
Porcupine quill earrings workshop
Thursday night tailgate party at the Paper Museum
Native American flutes
Lithic production

Early Registration Deadline: Friday, October 21
Lodging (Conference Rate Effective Until October 12): Hotel Mead, 451 East Grand Avenue, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494; Rooms: Single: $99, Double: $99, Suite: $119

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MIDWEST Open Air Museums

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Historic Clothing

Period Clothing Articles in the Midwest Open Air Museums
Magazine Vol. 1 - 30

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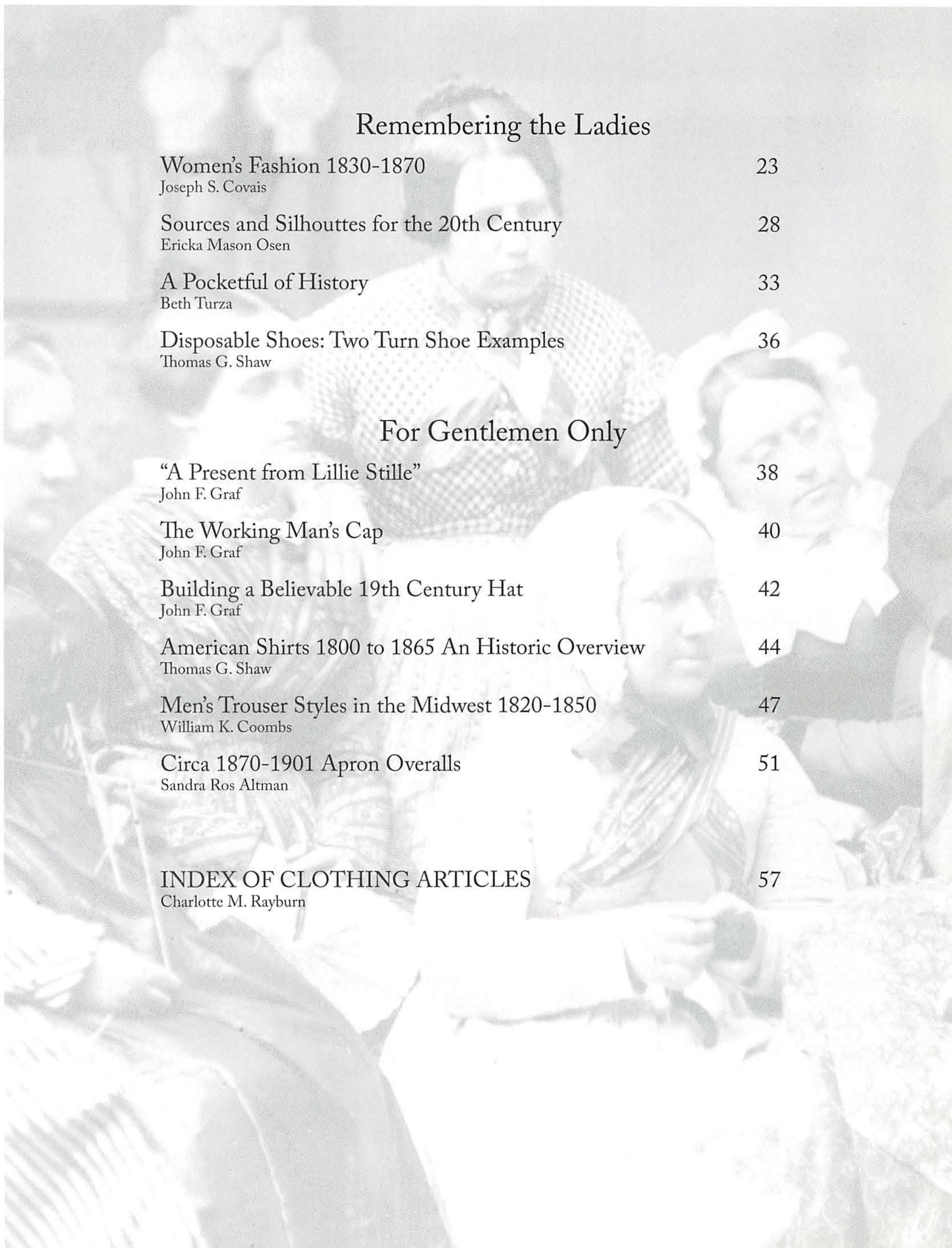
This is your LAST MOMCC Magazine. To renew go to MOMCC.org Complete the membership form & return with payment

About the Cover:

Albumen print on white cardstock, circa 1875-1885. Seven women dressed in clothing dated to the 1830s and 1840s. Two women are knitting. All seem to be listening to the one who appears to be speaking. This is possibly the cast of a theatrical production. Courtesy of the Oshkosh Public Museum.



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THE EDITORIUM

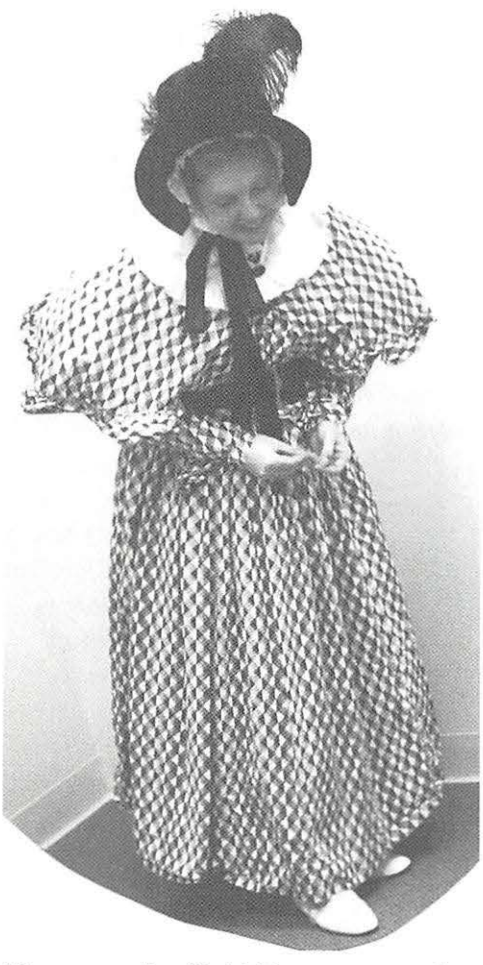
With Humble Thanks for Thirty Years of Historic Clothing Inspiration

Jan Kehr, Guest Editor

Once upon a time in the land of living history there was a tiny newsletter that grew up to be a strong and vibrant magazine. Every once in a while it's good to step back and see where we've been, appreciate all that's been accomplished and take a deep refreshing breath before moving forward. Sort of reminds you of painting a fence or weeding the garden doesn't it?

Imported Silk Ribbons
-Silk & Paper Flowers-

Jan Kehr interpreting in MadameTurza's Millinery Shop, Beth Turza, proprietress, *at the 1991 Fair at New Boston. The group won the Interpretive Award that year.*



The pattern for this 1830s gown, worn by Jan Kehr, was drafted from an original gown in the Tasha Tudor collection that was displayed at Conner Prairie (June 8-November 10, 2001).

Between the covers of this issue you'll find a sampling of period clothing articles spanning 30 years of publication and a comprehensive index by subject and author. It is fitting and appropriate that we thank the authors for their willingness to share their knowledge, research and period clothing expertise. Not all articles could be included, but hopefully the index will serve as our humble way of acknowledging everyone who has contributed to this body of knowledge, and resource for further exploration.

A conscious effort was made to include vintage articles. Articles were selected to cover a wide span of interests and time periods. We've included an early justification for period clothing policies in living history museums as well as articles that focus on research, method and topics of general interest (*From the Workbasket*). Other submissions focus on women's clothing (*Remembering the Ladies*) and men's wear (*For Gentlemen Only*). Obviously not every article can be reprinted due to page limitations. Apologies are offered if your favorite article is not here.

For readers under 30 enjoy these pearls of wisdom that were published before you were born. For the more 'seasoned' readers, please enjoy anew the inspiration you felt when you first read the article, marveled at the research, poured over the photographs or sketches and then rushed to grab needle and thread to create a garment or accessory for your interpretive wardrobe. Wasn't that new bonnet or pair of men's smallfall trousers just the thing to wear and enhance your interpretive skills at your living history venue. Remember the anticipation of attending a clothing workshop and the rush to finish the garment before Friday night's soiree. For many, your first chance to see and even handle an original period garment was at a conference presentation. O my! How far period clothing has come in 30 years.

Group that interpreted Madame Turza's Millinery Shop, Beth Turza, proprietress *at the 1991 Fair at New Boston (seated Jim Patton and Yolanda Burgess; back row l-to-r: Jan Kehr, Libby Coffey, Marc Follin, Mary Patton, and Beth Turza.*

Tom Shaw's introductory article "We Have Stood on the Shoulders of Giants" leads us through the evolution of period clothing research and MOMCC's involvement in the emerging world of Midwest living history interpretation

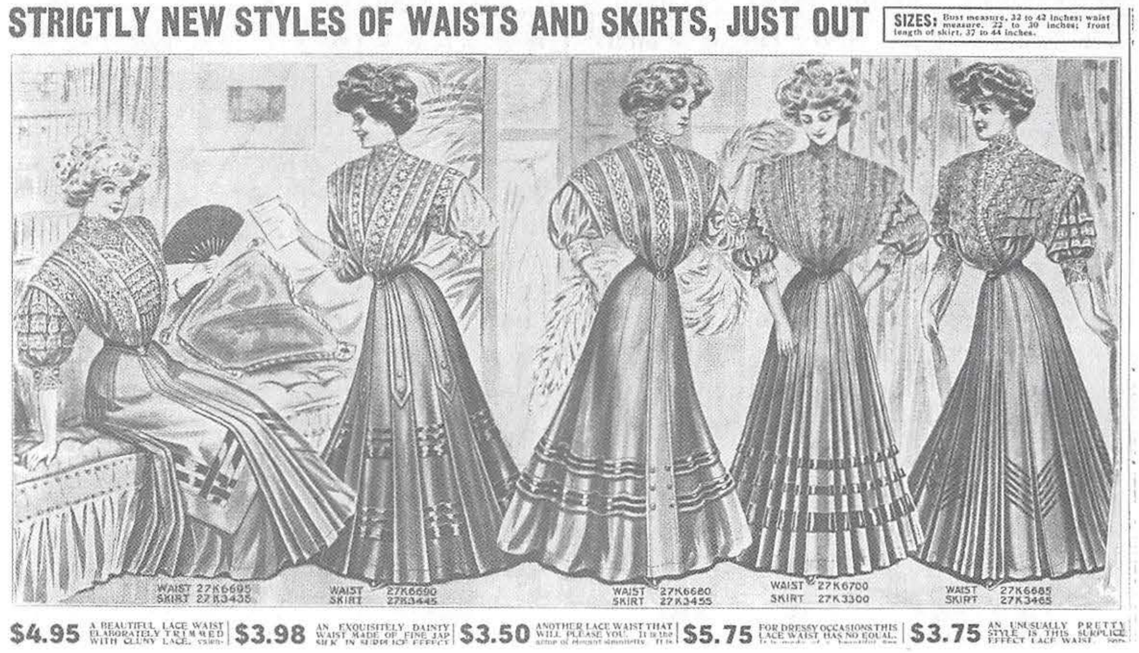
Like many of you, I was privileged to experience those fantastic mountains of original garments that Joe Covais literally piled upon tables at early MOMCC conferences. We read with eagerness each new entry in John Graf's "Closet." We gobbled up the research so graciously shared by Tom Shaw, Saundra Altman, Bill Combs, Beth Turza and the many others who contributed articles. Workshops by Beth, Saundra and Ericka Mason, now Osen, became standard fare at almost every conference. And those late night sew-fests and gab sessions about period clothing and "original garment finds" refueled us and improved our historical interpretations. We not only began to look more authentic, but we moved and talked and interpreted better.

And now that we've stepped back and admired the fence, what next? May I encourage you to use this issue. Place it in your sewing room; show it to your staff and volunteers.
Use this issue as inspiration for a training session or a public program.

Hopefully this retrospective issue sparks future researchers and writers to take period clothing down the next path.

It is with humble thanks that MOMCC pays homage to these authors who so graciously have taken us down the path thus far. Won't it be fun to see where the path leads us next?

Jan Kehr entered the museum field as a 'first person' resident in Conner Prairie's 1836 Village in 1978. She joined MOMCC in its early years and served as the organization's secretary from Fall 1996 to Fall 2008. She worked with interpretation, training and period clothing during her museum career. For several years Jan supervised Conner Prairie's period clothing department. It was a blessing and a joy to have the benefit of MOMCC period clothing articles and resources in those evolving days of historical dress. Jan loves creating and wearing period garments and truly appreciates the way period dress enhances interpretation.



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Sears, Roebuck & Co., Chicago, Ill. Catalogue no. 117 (1908), pg. 1133.

An Introduction

We Have Stood on the Shoulders of Giants

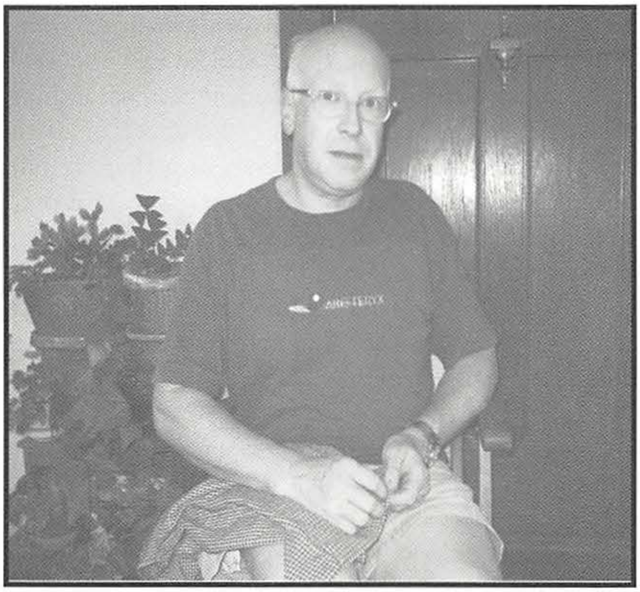
Thomas G. Shaw, The Clothing Bureau

It is very likely that more than a few of you reading this special issue of the *Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine* were drawn into the profession of public history by period-piece films or enacting. One of the attractions surely was the interesting 'costumes' of the past that transformed the film actors (anachronistic hair-styles not withstanding). Errol Flynn acted the same in every film regardless of whether he was Robin Hood or George Custer but the costumes made his roles believable to his adoring public.

For those with the enacting bug, the mere act of putting on a costume serves as a transport to the past. We feel different. Indeed we imagine ourselves as being from that time, however briefly. It could well be argued that this is mere fantasy. Indeed, it is fantasy. To believe that such trivialities can wash modern people clean of their cultural baggage and imbue them with the values, sensibilities and context of people of the past is to reduce the past to laughable simplicity.

What has become important in the study of the past during the last 40 years is our increased sophistication in extracting the stories of people from the things they made and used. This was the ostensible goal of the living-history movement. We thought that by replicating and using material culture, we would present a more accurate physical picture of the past. This in turn would help our visitors immerse themselves in the time and place while filling in some of the blanks that scholarship could not discern by sole dependence on the Holy Document.

Many open-air museums in the early 1970s elected to have their recreated farmers do their plowing, gardening, milking and preserving in what was conceived of as period dress. It just seemed that interpreters in modern clothes were out of place among the built environment and material culture of the past. Sometimes this effort was undertaken as an afterthought with 'calico' dresses, Chinese slippers and Gohn Brothers Amish trousers taking the place of real clothes. Other museums such as Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation used garments constructed from original examples using period techniques and then documented their 'life' as the garments were worn, washed, repaired and used up. The professional and public enthusiasm for role-playing interpretation in the early 1970's at Plimoth Plantation, Historic Fort Snelling and other historic sites was driven by this urge to make a direct connection with the past. At these places, visitors could 'meet' people of the past. Not just the famous dead white guys but previously anonymous farm folks, soldiers and store keepers. This was the true history of 'everyman and everywoman'. The first-person interpreters who took on these challenging roles wanted to be in everyway like the people they impersonated. To do this they needed to look the part.



Tom Shaw appears as a meek and mild-mannered tailor sewing a seam but his passion for historic clothing construction and historic context helped fuel the MOMCC *revolution that resulted in accurate, well-made and properly-worn period clothing.*

At the same time the hunger for historic 'time travel' was developing. Amateur historians, spurred by the Civil War centennial and the national bicentennial, took advantage of the moment to research certain aspects of the past and recreate what they documented. They scoured museums, and attics for things to copy, searched fabric shops and theatre costumers for materials, and learned archaic methods of sewing. Some of these early attempts produced truly marvelous reconstructions. Other makers could not or would not self-arrest themselves on the slippery slope of compromise and their products were truly comical.

Present readers of the *Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine* may wonder what all the fuss is about. Why is the organization offering a special edition republishing articles on period clothing? Big deal! Well, for a long time, nearly every issue of the *Magazine* had at least one article on some aspect of arcane dress. But in the 10 volumes published in the first decade of the 21st century, only **six** articles on clothing appeared (of course, the "Moment in Time" feature includes wonderful visual documentation of clothing in each issue). Perhaps this reflects the value added of articles published in the preceding 20 volumes, or perhaps it indicates the maturation of historic clothing research, or perhaps it suggests that attention to the details must be revitalized. As sites begin to interpret the 20th century, more on 20th century clothing should be provided. So, in the spirit of celebrating what we've done, and urging us to carry on the tradition, I offer these comments.

It may seem odd that the Midwest Open Air Museums Coordinating Council (MOMCC), which seeks to provide professional support and development to open-air museums, should be involved in the subject. There is, after all, the Costume Society of America. Yet, research into and the replication of period clothing for daily use has been an issue for MOMCC members these thirty years.

In part this is a result of MOMCC's focus on providing practical education and resources for its members. In part it is the legacy of a few individuals who were interested in the subject and bothered to write articles. In part it is because of the wide appeal of the organization, which includes living history museum administrators, curators, program directors, agriculture historians, interpreters and enactors.

I became involved in MOMCC in 1982 when I began working at the Minnesota Historical Society's Oliver H. Kelley Farm. The virtually brand new living history farm hosted the 1982 annual meeting. I participated by trying valiantly to conduct plowing with oxen in a bitter early November snow squall. I joined and have been an active member ever since. One thing I discovered early on was that the people who wrote articles in the *Magazine* (then the *MOMCC Newsletter*) had the same sort of interests I did as an interpreter. I was involved in black powder shooting as a teenager and had made several more or less successful attempts to create period clothing for myself. At the Kelley Farm we had to wear period clothes. Having worn this stuff for six months in every kind of weather in my role as an 1860s farmhand, I was keenly interested in clothes. Not because I was particularly interested in them in and of themselves but because the clothing became a part of my everyday routine. I naturally wondered if the reproductions were historically correct, if they fit the way they should fit, if they did the job they were supposed to do and if we were wearing what a person of the past would have worn. (I suspected not because I had been cold and wet a good share of October.)

I had just arrived at graduate school at Eastern Michigan University in the winter of 1983 when Volume IV, Number I of the *MOMCC Newsletter* arrived in my mailbox. In that issue was an article by Bill Coombs modestly titled 'Some Thoughts on a Period Clothing Program'. Bill was a enactor, collector and at that time director of interpretation at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site (LLC). Under Tom Vance's direction, the site was being transformed from a house museum in a state park to a living history farm interpreted by first-person role players portraying the family and neighbors of Thomas and Sarah Bush Lincoln in 1845. Bill, Tom and Randy Jackson were making every effort within their small means to recreate the world of Gooseneck Prairie right down to the dress of the role players. Bill's article was seminal. He passionately argued that period clothing should be as important a part of the interpretive program as buildings, furnishings, animals and grounds. He advocated specific regional research, thorough examination of original artifacts and attention to the details of period patterns and construction as well as materials and fabric. In reading this article after almost thirty years, it is as relevant today as it was then.

In March 1983, the first MOMCC Interpreters' Seminar was held at the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. Bill and other LLC staff and volunteers presented a session about their efforts to replicate wardrobes for the site. Their 'impressions' were the talk of the seminar. They were fully clothed from the inside out. The textiles and construction techniques were true to the period and they had done it themselves. At the dance in Lovett Hall they seemed perfectly in place with the music of Glen Morningstar and the Rough Water String Band. When Bill and Randy Jackson got together with Steve Osman from Historic Fort Snelling and a few other enactor/historians, the talk frequently turned to *cool* original garments they had discovered, sources of reproductions and ways to acquire accurate, affordable replicas. MOMMC has been talking about these same topics ever since.

Bill and Tom also introduced Joe Covais to MOMCC. Joe was a self-taught period tailor who Bill had known for awhile. His firm, New Columbia, had been providing Civil War uniforms to enactors and had recently relocated to Charleston, Illinois. Joe had and still has a profound influence on MOMCC. He certainly viewed member museums as potential clients and often came to meetings with ready-made garments to sell. Joe was the first, and perhaps the best, of the manufacturers to produce men's civilian clothing. It was expensive by the standards of the time but you paid for more than just the work. Behind Joe's products was an astounding and ever-growing body of knowledge about 19th-century clothing and construction techniques. Joe was an avid collector of original clothing and an astute reader of the artifact. I can remember him arriving at the Interpreters' Seminar at Mount Carol with his old black VW Beatle stuffed to the ceiling with Hollinger boxes full of garments. His displays were fabulous and his sessions using his collections were the highlight of many conferences. No doubt Joe got tired of talking about period clothes (he had a zillion hobbies) but he patiently educated anyone who was interested. New Columbia no longer exists and the museum world is a poorer place for it. There are few vendors today who you can tell what a client needs and produce a product that is absolutely right. Joe has moved on to other things but his knowledge, good humor and passion live on. When he sold his tremendous collection a number of years ago, several regional museums were able to purchase items for their collections. Some of the most prized garments in my own collection were obtained from Joe, and I never look at an original garment without thinking about what Joe would say about it.

The knowledge and curiosity generated by the community in Charleston attracted people with similar interests to MOMCC. When Tom Vance edited the ambitious *Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine* in 1986, one of the first articles was one by Bill Coombs on trousers. Articles on period clothing have been a staple ever since. Indeed, it would not be too much to say that clothing articles in the *Magazine* have attracted many new members to MOMCC. Beth Turza came to the organization from the world of Civil War enacting. Beth was already a talented period seamstress when she joined, and the *Magazine* articles that she wrote examined artifacts with a view towards reproducing them. Beth went on to a business conducting bonnet-making workshops, and she offered them several times at conferences. MOMCC members have always liked to make things when they get together and Beth's workshops never failed to satisfy that creative urge. Beth is still active in MOMCC, and her extensive collection still informs her work and her contributions to MOMCC.

John Graf was another graduate student at Eastern Illinois working with the Lincoln Log Cabin project when he began his association with the *Magazine*. Like many museum people, John had and still has more interests than can be satisfied in one lifetime. He succeeded Bill Coombs as director of interpretation at LLC and continued to work with Randy Jackson on improving the farming program as well as developing the Sergeant Farm component of the site. John also had a fascination with photography and daguerreotypes in particular, serving as president of the Daguerrean Society for a time. John ran a column entitled *Graf's Closet* in which he examined clothing accessories. Like Beth, he had a practical bent to all his work. These articles usually included a pattern and instructions on how to make one, and some of the more requested articles have been John's because of their practicality. Like all good material culture historians, John was interested in the personal stories and connections behind the artifacts and using those stories to inform visitors through interpretive programs.

Saundra Altman came to MOMCC through her business, Past Patterns. Historic sites and museums were some of her natural clients but more than that, the members of MOMCC shared her passion for getting the details right. Sandra is one of the most meticulous researchers and writers to have graced the pages of the *Magazine*. Her files are compendious and once she gets her teeth into a project nothing can stop her. While she saves most of her research for her patterns, she does share often at conferences and through focused articles in the *Magazine*. On one occasion, Saundra generously provided an article straight out of one of her patterns. You will find that article on early 19th century trousers in this issue. Through her business, Saundra conducts workshops around the country. Her influence on museums and hobbyists has been profound. Her patterns are complete sources on particular garments. It takes a focused person to produce patterns which fit modern people, are logical in their assembly instructions and result in an accurately completed garment. Past Patterns long ago set the standard by which all other historical patterns are judged. Saundra has been an enthusiastic supporter of the organization for many years and never fails to promote it. Her generosity and dedication to getting it right have been driving forces in improving the presentation of period clothing at historic sites and among hobbyists.

So, what is all the fuss about? The study of historic dress in the past thirty years has enabled museums to present a more accurate picture of people of the past to the public. The exercise has forced us to minutely examine portraits, photographs, journals, store accounts, estate inventories and original garments. The interdisciplinary sources have revealed much more to us than we anticipated about those whose lives we seek to understand. The living-history museum movement was and still is grounded in a desire to better understand people of the past who are not represented in the written record. It has been a search for our collective past selves. The collective interest of MOMCC in period clothing has been an effort to intimately connect ourselves and our visitors with people of the past. Every museum searches for ways to attract and involve visitors in our ever-diversifying society. In the years I worked for the interpretive program at Historic Fort Snelling, I have found that every visitor was reachable through dress and food. Everyone wears clothes and everyone eats. That initial connection can be the door to meaningful experiences.

The editors hope you will enjoy this somewhat nostalgic special issue. Even more, they hope you will be inspired to contribute your own expertise in the future and that the work of the authors will be useful in the here and now.

The open-air museum field has come a long way in understanding the complexities of our subjects. We have yet a long way to go but perhaps the acts of discovery contained in this special issue will be an inspiration to go further down this road. To ask the unasked question. To make the elusive connection. To better serve the public in understanding who we are and how we came to be that way.

Thomas G. Shaw was the Assistant Site Manager of the Minnesota Historical Society's Historic Fort Snelling for twenty years. He has been the chair of ALHFAM's Historic Apparel and Textiles committee and a board member of the Costume Society's region III. His firm, The Clothing Bureau, specializes in accurate replica men's clothing and uniforms for museum exhibits and historic site use.

The Devil is in the Details":

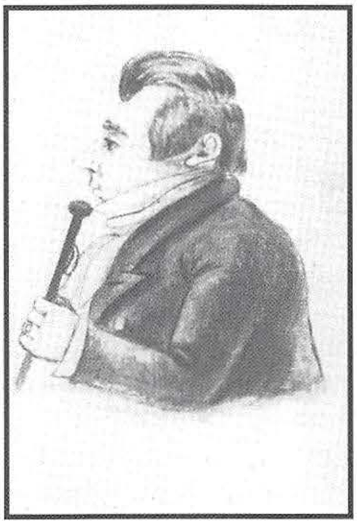
by Ericka Mason

Tips & Tidbits on Historic Clothing

19th Century Shirt Cuffs

One of the easiest to spot mistakes made in the reproduction of men's shirts is found on the cuff. Placement of the buttonhole is one of the most often overlooked details in the making of shirts. From 1800 through about 1870 the buttonholes are located very high on shirt cuffs, in the uppermost comer of the cuff, with the button sewn to the corresponding corner of the cuff. By placing the closure nearest the wrist bone the rest of the cuff splayed open over the hand (Fig. 1). By 1880 the buttonhole had migrated to the middle of the cuff (Fig. 2). The same placement continues on men's dress shirts of today.

Ericka Mason supervised historic clothing at Conner Prairie when she prepared this.



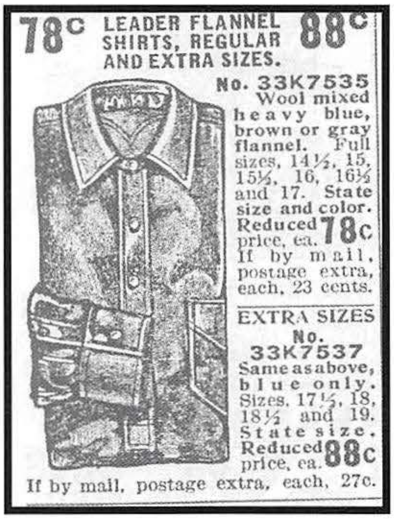


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Fig. 1: Sketch of Joseph Smith [Jr.] (1805-1844) by Benjamin West, Rochester, Illinois. The sketch shows Smith's shirt cuffs extending beyond his jacket sleeves and flaring as Mason describes. Source: Betty I. Madden, Art, Crafts and Architecture in Early Illinois (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 205.
Fig. 2: A flannel shirt sold by Sears, Roebuck & Co., shows the central location of the cuff button and button hole. Source: Sears, Roebuck & Co., Chicago, Ill. Catalogue no. 117 (1908), pg. 969.

"The Devil is in the Details" appeared in Open Air Museums Magazine 23, no. 1 (2002): 21. It did not include illustrations.

A Philosophy

Some Thoughts on a Period Clothing Program

William K. Combs

The "costuming" of interpreters has long been practiced at historic sites, but not until recently [in the context of the post-Bicentennial interest in living history] has period clothing been considered as an important interpretive tool. Part of the problem has been a lack of understanding of the original garments and a lack of understanding of how to go about setting up a good period clothing program.

At Lincoln Log Cabin, we have been wrestling with this problem for the past year and have come up with a formula for success that has worked well for us. Steps involved in setting up such a program include developing a proper attitude toward period clothing, researching site- and time-specific clothing, obtaining accurate patterns, constructing the garments and learning how to wear them.

The first and most important step in developing a clothing program is in adopting a proper attitude. Period clothing should not be thought of as "costuming." People of the past did not wear costumes, they wore clothing! Clothing is strong, comfortable and well-made, whereas costumes are temporary facades made to resemble clothing. It is important to the look and comfort of the interpreters that they, too, think of it as clothing, and the best way to bring about this change in thinking is to outlaw the word "costume."

Secondly, period clothing should be considered as an important aspect of the interpretive presentation of the site. In many cases, in the rush to accurately portray the buildings, furnishings and grounds, the period clothing worn by the interpreters is, at best, an afterthought. As a result, any "old timey" clothes or bicentennial costumes are presented to the public as accurate representations of what people really wore. Period clothing must be accorded a status equal to other aspects of the site.

Because of regional and ethnic differences, your research should be as site-specific as possible. New Englanders will not necessarily be wearing the same clothing as Midwesterners, and this is especially true of rural or frontier clothing. General fashion histories and sources from outside your region may be helpful in aiding you to understand general styles and trends, but try to base your clothing program on sources from your own region or area.

Research sources would include original garments, photographs, genre paintings, books, diaries and other written accounts. By far the best source in clothing research is the original garments themselves. Check the holdings of state museums, historical societies in major urban areas as well as collections in private hands. Styles, fabric types and details of construction can all be documented from close-examination. Measurements should be taken and drawings made to help make patterns.

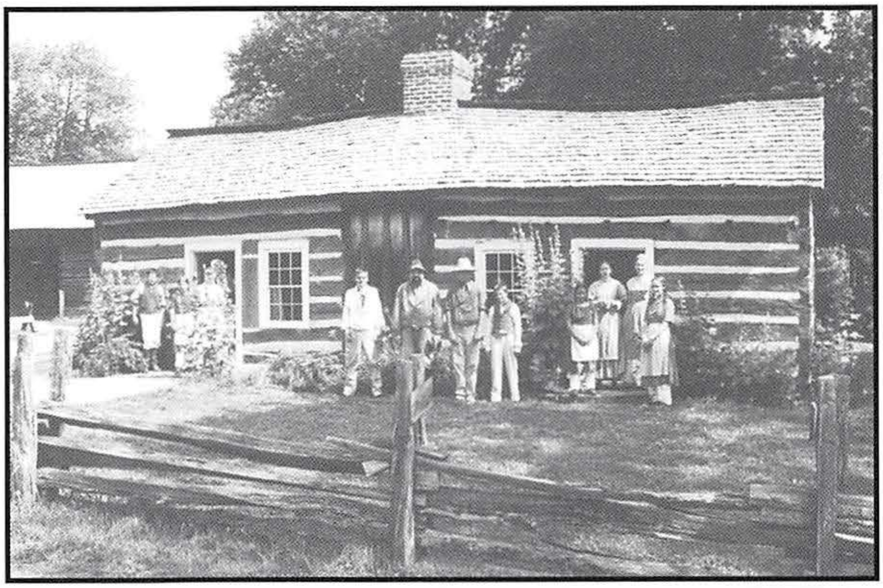
Photographs and genre paintings can provide important

Abraham Lincoln (Joe Woodard) visits his father and stepmother at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site as visitors look on.

Photos courtesy of Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site details about period clothing. They often document common work clothing of an era which was usually worn out and discarded and thus never survived to be accessioned into a clothing collection. Photographs and paintings also show how garments fit and in what combinations people wore them and accessorized them.

Period books and written descriptions as well as modern scholar works on period clothing can also be quite valuable. One of the most notable publications of the period is *Godey's Ladies Book*, which helped set fashion styles in all parts of the country. Also, period travel accounts, letters, diaries, store accounts and other period writings give descriptions of period clothing being worn at the time.

Considerable useable information will also come from secondary sources but cross-check, information to be sure that any one source is accurate. A list of selected secondary sources appears at the end of this article.



Photos courtesy of Lincoln Log Cabin State

Interpreters at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site, Lerna, Illinois, decked out in historic clothing made possible by their sewing skills and the hard work of Bill Combs, Tom Vance and numerous seamstresses, tailors and vendors of replica clothing and accoutrements.

Having completed your basic research, the next step is to apply your information to obtaining the needed garments. If you have the resources, talents and manpower on site, you can produce them yourself, or you can have them made or buy them outright depending upon what your needs are. In having clothing made, local seamstresses can often do a good job if supervised to assure historical accuracy, or a professional in the field of historic clothing reproduction can be contacted.

The advantage to such contract work is that it can be done to fulfill your specific needs, but there are sources for ready-made period clothing which certainly can fulfill some needs. Be sure to carefully check for quality and historical accuracy in any ready-made period clothing before making a purchase.

If you elect to produce your own period clothing, the first step is to produce accurate patterns. There are a few good commercial patterns available. These patterns, however, are not suitable for every site and can be difficult to work with at times. The most desirable method of acquiring patterns is from the original garments. This, however, requires some skill, particularly in developing different sizes than the original. If someone on staff is not talented in this area, then it would be best to find someone who can help you draft the patterns.

For patterns which cannot be purchased or for which you cannot find an original garment to copy, there are several books which have scaled patterns in them. These are taken from clothing in museum collections, and although they may not be from a specific area, they often can be adapted to your particular needs. Titles of some useful sources can be found in the bibliography.

Armed with the needed patterns, you are now ready to purchase fabric and begin construction of your period clothing. Fabrics used should be 100 percent natural, both for obtaining an authentic look and for safety. Synthetic fabrics are highly flammable, can catch fire more readily and cause more severe burns than natural fabrics. Natural fabrics may be a little harder to locate but will be well worth the time and effort to find them. Good copies of period fabrics are surprisingly easy to find at local fabric shops and can often be found on sale. Mill outlets and the larger discount fabric stores are usually good places to look.

With patterns and fabric in hand you are now ready to begin construction. Following period construction techniques in making period clothing is important to the proper look of the finished garments. Many details which are not seen, or are very small, still add to the appearance of the item. Such things as padding, interfacing or hand-stitching are

A version of this article originally appeared in vol. 4, no. 1 (February 1983) of the Magazine. *Bill based it on experiences gained as he worked at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site near Lerna, Illinois and as he and Tom Vance developed historic clothing for living history interpretation.*

indispensable on most 19th century clothing. Study the original garments to discover these details, then use them in your reconstruction. Generally, period garments must be fitted to the interpreters who will wear them, and a dress form set to the proper size greatly aids in the construction.

If your interpretation predates the common use of the sewing machine (about 1860 for most areas) then all topstitching and buttonholes should be hand stitched. Machine buttonholes, in fact, are not correct until after the late 1880s. Any seam which does not show, however, can be machine sewn to speed up production.

Interpreters should be aware of the correct way to wear their clothing. In many cases, proper underclothing is essential for the outfit to have the correct look. For example, most ladies' dresses from about 1830 to the turn of the century must have at least three petticoats under them to give the skirt the correct fullness. This is true even for rural or lower class dresses.

Period eyeglasses are also important. Inexpensive turn of the century frames are very common at antique shops and flea markets, and most any prescription can be put in them. These will then work well with most 19th century impressions. Correct hair styles or ways to cover up incorrect ones should also be a part of the interpreter's training, along with instructions not to wear modern jewelry or makeup.

It is important to remember that people in the past tended to dress more formally than we do today. Men always wore a hat or cap and were seldom without a vest and coat. Women always wore bonnets of some type when going out-of-doors. Interpreters should never appear half dressed.

It is hoped that some of these ideas maybe of help to you in developing a period clothing program. As with any major effort at a historic site, just remember that developing a quality program will take time. It is best to go slowly and really be sure of your results. Period clothing, if well done, will be one of the high points of your interpretive program and well worth the effort to do it right.

Selected Sources

None of the following books deal directly with Midwestern clothing. A book on that subject has not, to my knowledge, been written.

The following sources provide good overviews and many of them contain scale patterns which can be adapted to Midwestern styles.

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DATING HISTORIC COSTUME

By Donna C. Parker

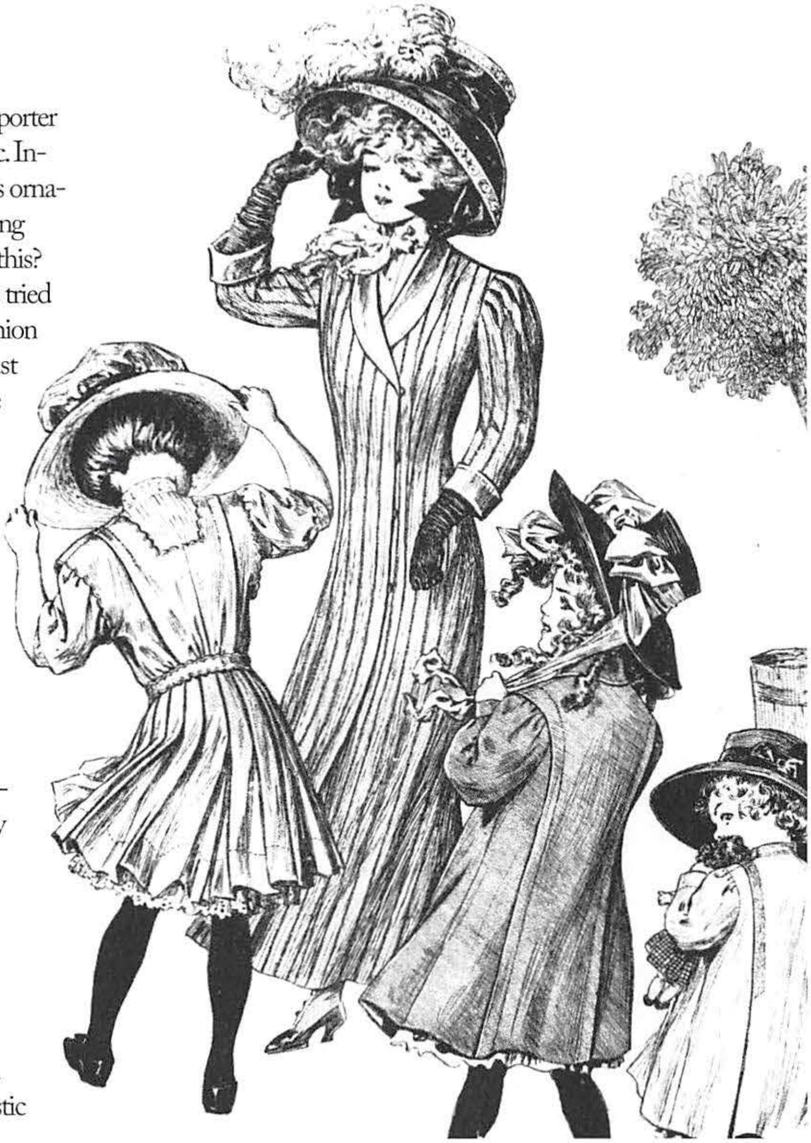

Fig. 1: The Delineator, *a popular women's magazine, presented both women and children's fashion. (The Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University)*

It was a bright and sunny day. Mrs. Taylor, a staunch supporter of the new local museum, rummages around in her dusty attic. Intent upon spring cleaning, she sorts through boxes of Christmas ornaments and old magazines when, suddenly, she discovers something more valuable than Aunt Jane's false teeth! Whose dress was this? Could it have been Grandma's? Grandma's wedding dress? She tried to picture her pious, old grandmother bedecked in this lovely fashion creation, but somehow the two do not mesh. It must be old—just look at the funny style. She wonders how to determine the age of the dress.

As in the case of Mrs. Taylor's gown, the passing of years has orphaned many garments so carefully packed away in attics, closets, and trunks. Their histories have become lost.

Dating historic clothing is by no means a simple task. The most wealthy individuals certainly wore high style fashions, but for those of lesser means the fashionableness of one's clothing depended on income, class, employment, age, and availability of goods. Accurately dating a garment entails weighing these factors against each other. The following steps supply a useful guide in establishing an approximate date for historic garments.

ACQUIRING A BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF COSTUME HISTORY

Before examining the garment itself, it is necessary to develop a familiarity with costume history. An understanding of the stylistic features of different decades and the events which influenced changes in fashion can help to date the garment and to place the object in context. Secondary sources compiled by costume historians are invaluable to a basic understanding of style. Costume history books, fashion encyclopedias, and fashion dictionaries provide a survey. Books about historic textiles, laces, trims, and accessories supply the details. Essential to the study of costume are primary source materials such as paintings, fashion plates, women's periodicals, mail-order catalogs, and photographs.

Although paintings spring to mind as a good visual source, these renderings can be misleading. Painting techniques, dirt, varnish, and an artist's style can obscure seam lines, exaggerate details, and give an appearance not true to the subject. Generally, the more naive the painter, the more detailed the subject and costume will appear (Arnold, 1973).

Fashion plates are color illustrations found in women's magazines such as Godey's Lady's Book and Harper's Bazaar. In representing the fashion ideal these drawings exaggerate the lines of the costume. Many women, unable to afford high style clothing, copied ideas from the illustrations. Fashion magazines presented not only women's fashion but that of men and children as well. In addition to fashion plates, these periodicals were full of drawings, engravings, fashion advice, and instructions on making an innumerable number of accessories. Today's Housewife (Van Auken, 1923), particularly interested in helping the homemaker economize in her spending, supplied helpful hints and advice on developing a serviceable wardrobe so she would not "squander" all her winter's allowance on one "ravishing frock." **(Fig. 1)**

A wonderful source for the study of costume, mail-order catalogs focus less on the high fashion ideal and more on affordable clothing. They give excellent descriptions of apparel indicating cost, fabrics, and accessories. The development of the ready-to-wear clothing industry changed forever the way a person bought their clothing. No longer was there a personalized relationship between the dressmaker and patron but that of customer and rack.

Dated photographs are also a good source for identifying costume. Typically, people dressed for a studio sitting in their best clothes that may or may not have reflected what they wore day to day. Also, photographers dressed and carefully posed subjects in a variety of costumes. **(Fig. 2)** With George Eastman's introduction of the Kodak in 1888 (Weitzman, 1976) and the subsequent increase in amateur photography during the late nineteenth century, images taken of family, friends, and acquaintances tended to be naturalistic and portrayed a more accurate representation of clothing worn daily. **(Fig. 3)** Candid photography reflected the fashion consciousness of a region.

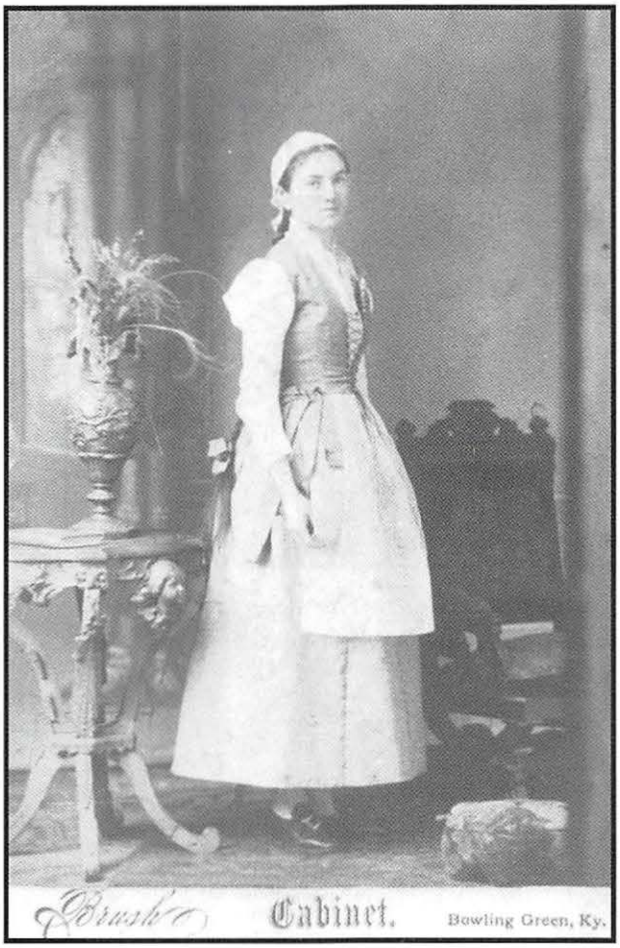

Fig. 2: Mary Calvert posed as a milkmaid by a Bowling Green photographer. (The Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University)

The list of primary sources containing visual information about costume is as endless as the imagination! In addition to the primary source materials, many books on the market reproduce the fashion pages of women's magazines and mail-order catalogs. For example, Everyday Fashions of the Twenties (Blum, 1981) include illustrations from Sears, Roebuck and other mail-order catalog of the period. Two replicas of catalogs that advertise turn-of-the-century clothing are the 1895 Montgomery Ward and Company catalog (Emmet, 1969) and the 1908 Sears, Roebuck and Company catalog (Schroeder, 1969).

STUDYING THE STYLISTIC FEATURES

Knowledge of costume history gained through the study of primary and secondary source materials will help to identify the garment's stylistic features. Not everyone, though, dressed in the height of fashion. Age, economics, locality, and time period, among other variables determined whether an individual's garb was in keeping with current fashion. Examine the past two centuries of fashion evolution in five to ten year spans. Pinpointing the period when features characteristic of the garment came into vogue will establish the earliest possible date of the garment. Fashion features came, went, and came back again. Study all portions of the dress as a unit. For example, the leg-o-mutton sleeves of 1820s and 1830s women's dresses might be confused with those of the 1890s. However, a study of the neckline, waist placement, and skirt construction of garments from these time periods would reveal from which era the dress came. At this point refer to specific primary and secondary sources.

Taking measurements of the dress as it lays flat on a table, covered with a clean, white sheet, will be helpful at this point. Handle fragile historic clothing with extreme care. Find one location the garment can reside, undisturbed, while being examined. Museum professionals wear clean, white cotton gloves when touching historic clothing and handle these items as little as possible. They also prohibit eating, drinking, and smoking in the work area.

Only after thoroughly measuring such details as the neckline, shoulder width, waist, and skirt length, can the main stylistic features of the costume be defined. Does the garment have a high waistline? Does the hem touch the floor? Do the sleeves end at the wrist? Notice other features of the garment. Does the closure tie, pin, hook, or zip? Do beads, braid, or sequins embellish the dress? All of these features are good indicators of the garment's date.

After examining the different parts of the garment, consider the total silhouette. Visualizing a costume dressed on a person is not an easy task, particularly without the benefit of a dress form and supporting underclothing. Stylistic features already identified help in establishing the garment's silhouette. Find photographs or illustrations of similar dress and study their silhouettes. Finally, compare the garment with clothing on displaying in museums that has an established date. The study of firmly dated costumes supplies valuable information about the fashion consciousness of a region.

EXAMINING THE GARMENT'S CONSTRUCTION

In many cases the print and design of a fabric assist in dating a garment. Keep in mind though that women refurbished their old

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dresses and fabrics into new gowns (Arnold, 1973). An examination of the garment's construction gives several clues as to the era of the piece. Look at the seams to determine if the garment is hand sewn or machine made. **(Fig. 4)** Hand sewing is characterized by the use of one thread in an overcast stitch. Elias Howe developed the principles of the eye pointed needle and lock stitch, patented his sewing machine in 1846, and by the 1850s perfected it enough to be mass produced (Kidwell and Christmas, 1979). Machine sewn clothing would not date prior to this period. Tags or marks on a garment that identify a dressmaker or manufacturer place the garment within the time frame of the establishment's operation, if information about that particular business is available. **(Fig. 5)** Unfortunately, many dressmakers did not tag their garments.

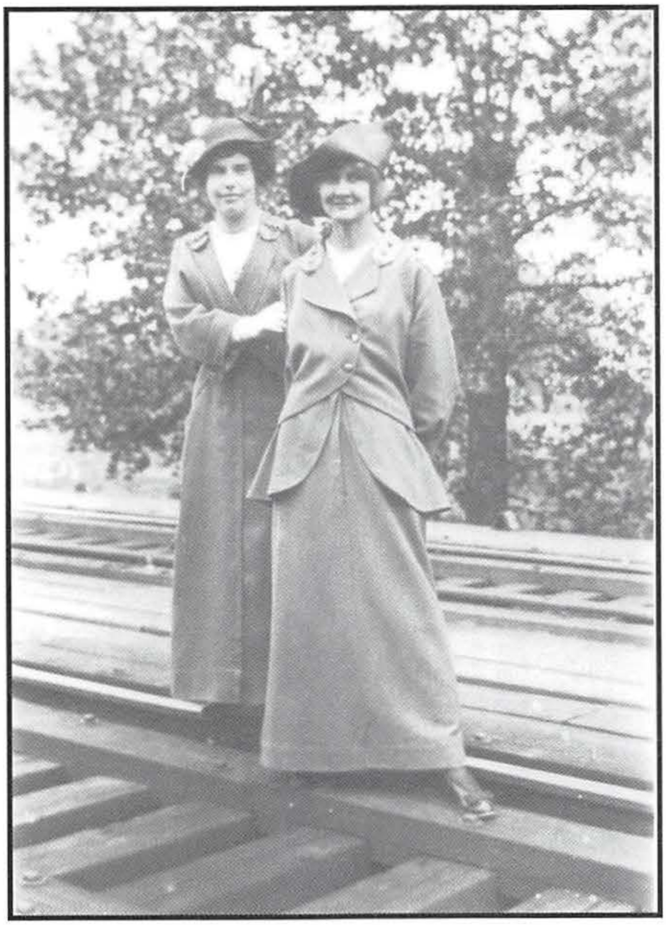
Fig. 3: Two young women dressed for a Sunday outing in 1914. (The Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University)

Examine the seam lines of the garment for signs of alteration. One gown required many yards of costly fabric. Clothing was much too precious to be thrown away. Women in an effort to keep in fashion refurbished their clothes rather than discard them. The holes from the needle remain in the fabric along the original seam lines in a reconstructed garment (Arnold, 1973).

ANALYZING THE FABRIC

Begin by identifying the garment's fabric. Some components that characterize a particular fabric are its fiber content, weave structure, and, and its print or design. The first step in the identification of any kind of fabric is a visual inspection. This will require the use of a microscope with a 140X magnification. Taking extreme care not to damage the garment, clip a few fibers from an obscure part of the costume such as a raveled seam, place these fibers in a drop of water on a microscope slide and view them under magnification. This method identifies several of the most commonly used fibers.

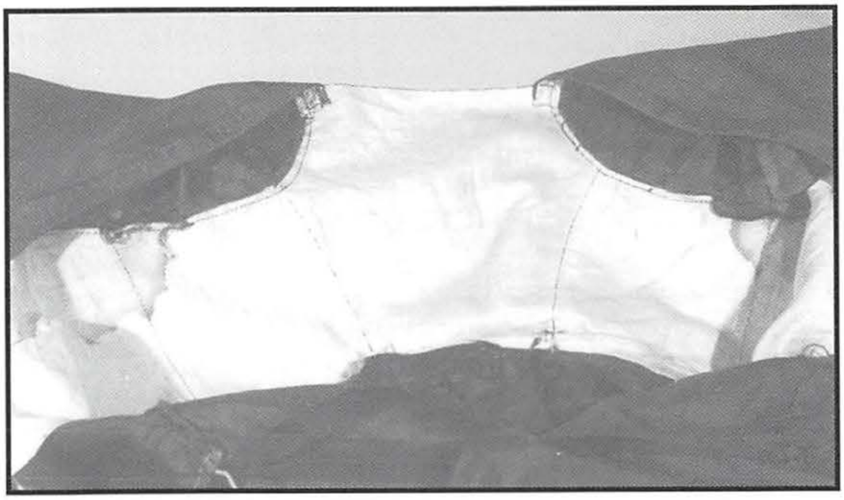
Fig. 4: A close examination of this gown reveals hand sewn seams. (The Kentucky Museum, Western Kentucky University)

Before the development of man-made fibers, textile producers obtained materials to make cloth from plants or animals. The most widely used were flax, cotton, wool, and silk (Hollen, Saddler, and Langford, 1979). These will be the types most commonly found in clothes that date prior to the twentieth century. Flax, identified by the nodes, or crosswise marking, on the fiber, resembles cane or a cornstalk (Hollen, et al., 1979) Cotton, on the other hand, has the appearance of a slightly twisted ribbon caused by the collapse of the central canal as the fiber lost its moisture.

Wool and silk are complete opposites in appearance. The cuticle, the outside layer of scales on the fiber, makes wool easily identifiable. Silk appears smooth, lustrous, and transparent when viewed under the microscope and is easily confused with man-made fibers since both are filaments. Visual inspection may not be adequate to identify a garment's fiber content. Man-made fibers appear similar to each other under microscopic examination.

Next, examine the fabric's weave structure. Variations in the balance, size, texture, color, and fiber content of the yarns can give fabrics of the same weave structure totally different appearances. For example, batiste, gingham, and taffeta are all plain weaves, but

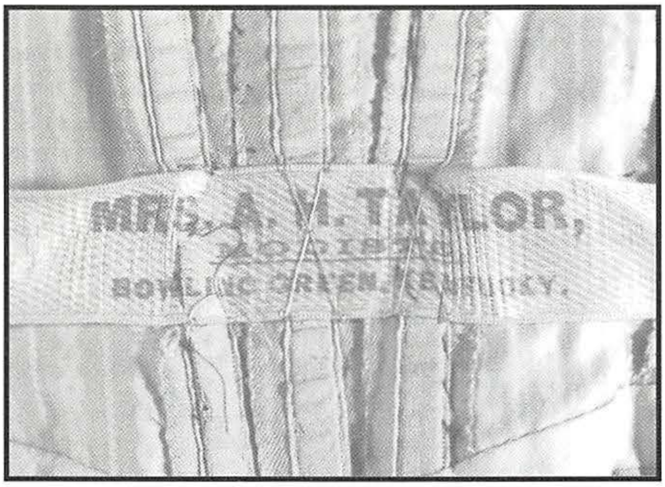

Fig. 5: Garment tag used by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Dressmaking Establishment of Bowling Green, Kentucky in the latter days of the business's operation. (The Kentucky Museum, Western Kentucky University)

each has its own distinguishing characteristics. Batiste is a fine, sheer fabric made of varying materials. Gingham is a yarn-dyed, cotton cloth woven in a checkered design. Taffeta is a common fabric made from rep construction in which the warp threads are larger than weft threads (Wilson, 1979). A useful source for identifying weave structures and their variations is *The Primary Structure of Fabrics* (Emery, 1966). *Textiles In America 1650-1870* (Montgomery, 1984) is particularly helpful when working with historic textiles.

The process of dating a costume can be very satisfying and can develop a better understanding of the garment's historical significance. Dated clothing proves to be a valuable source for reproducing period garments. In addition to the satisfaction by identifying orphaned garments individuals might discover a treasure hidden for years in their own backyard. Whatever the outcome, the process of dating a historic costume is an intensive and enjoyable learning experience.

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CLOTHING COLLECTIONS ON-LINE: THE WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Wisconsin Historical Society includes 2,000 items from its "Children's Clothing Collection" which patrons can search by decade (from before the 1800s through the 1990s), by gender (boys, girls, infants and non-gender-specific clothing) and by garment type (footwear, headwear, outerwear, underwear, accessories and other items). Additional garments appear among the 200 objects in "Curators' Favorites" and 150 moccasins are featured in the "Moccasin Collection."

http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/collections/online/

Crocheted Miser's Purses

by Gina Thompson

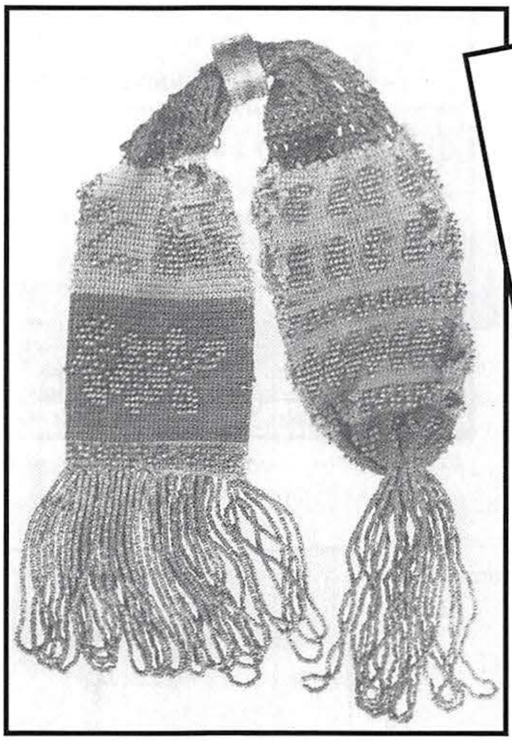
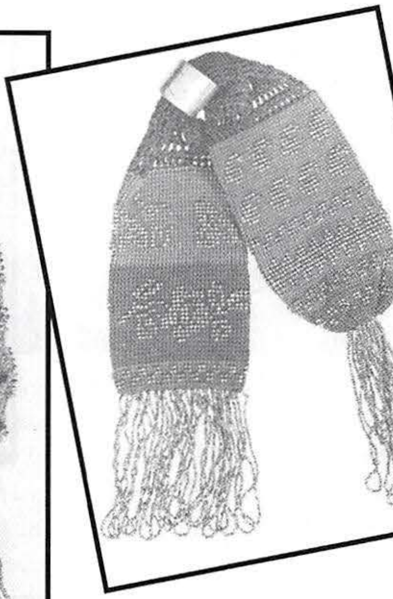


Fig. 1: *Original miser's purse, 1840-1860. Dark green and coral silk with cut steel beads. Author's collection.*



Photographs by Alan Harvey.

Fig. 2: Miser's purse reproduced from original (see Fig. 1). Executed by author in silk and cut steel beads.

The general use of the miser's or long purse began around the last quarter of the 18th century. It continued, with fluctuating popularity, well into the 1920s. Interestingly, the style and design elements of these purses remained fairly static throughout this entire period. The techniques and materials used in their manufacture were equally as consistent. Carried in hand, in pockets, or suspended from skirt waistbands on chatelaine hooks, they were used by women and to some extent by men. Their primary function was holding coins and currency.

Although many different needlework techniques were used in making these purses, the crocheted version seems to be most dominant. Crocheting was one of the needle arts invariably taught to most young girls. Every woman possessed some level of proficiency with the crochet needle, and had the skills necessary to make this type of item. Surviving examples range from the fairly elementary in design and workmanship to those exhibiting exquisite design quality and flawless execution (**Fig. 1**).

It is the relative consistency with which these purses were made that makes extant examples extremely difficult to accurately date. Original patterns or instructions found in ladies magazines and other needlework publications often give a clearer picture of when specific techniques, design motifs, and colors were most popular. Tubular in shape, they ranged anywhere from two to seven inches in width and from six to twenty-four inches in length, the average being somewhere between two to four inches in width and six to twelve inches in length. These measurements exclude the fringes and other trims that were used to finish the purse ends. There is some speculation that the purses carried by men were somewhat larger and/or longer. This may hold true during the earlier popularity of this type of purse. However, patterns for gentlemen's purses found in 1840-1860 issues of Godey's Lady's *Book and Magazine, Peterson's Magazine,* and *Frank Leslie's Ladies Gazette,* do not bear this out. Patterns for purses designed specifically for men seem to disappear completely after 1860. Most patterns, in fact, give no indication as to the sex of the intended user.

Miser's purses were basically composed of three sections, which are relatively equal in length. These were the two sack-like purse ends and the center section which contained the "slit" or opening. It was through this opening that the money was inserted. On this center section were generally found two "slides" or rings. The slides were approximately three quarters of an inch in diameter and resembled band-like finger rings. It was the slides that prevented the money from passing back up into the center section where it could have been lost through the opening.

There are some extant examples with only one slide (**Fig. 1**). The reason for this is unclear. Original patterns consistently call for sets (pairs) of slides, and having a slide to close off each of the two ends would certainly be most desirable. Because of the way these purses were constructed, it is unlikely that the slides slipped off and were lost.

The ends were either round or square in shape, or a combination of the two.

Often, the two ends were purposely shaped and/or embellished differently (**Fig. 3**). By designing the purse in this manner, the maker made it easy for the wearer to determine what each end contained, as each might hold a different type or amount of money. Also, if lighting was poor or nonexistent, these differences made it possible to tell which end was which by touch.

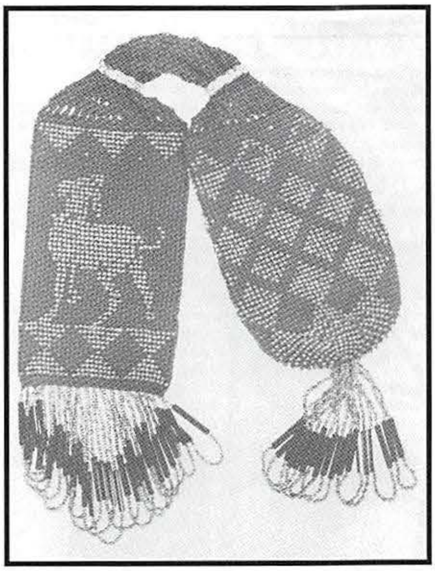


Fig. 3: Miser's purse with dog motif, 1840-1860. Possibly a gentleman's purse. Reproduced by author in black silk and cut steel beads.

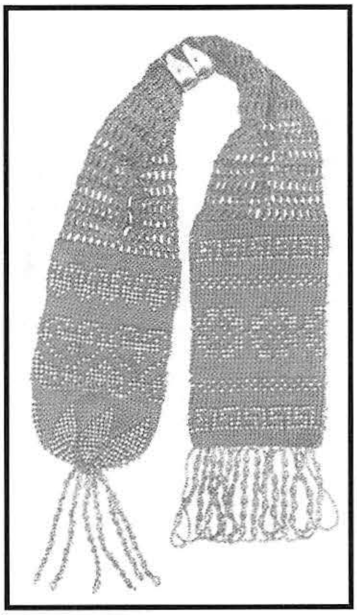


Fig. 4: Miser's purse reproduced from an original pattern c1923. Executed by author in blue silk and cut steel beads.

As previously stated, throughout the almost 150 years that these purses were being made, the materials used to produce them were virtually the same. For example, a pattern from an 1846 issue of Godey's *Ladies' Book* calls for the use of "crochet silk" and "steel beads." In 1923, an Anne Orr design for a "Miser's Purse with Metal Rings," appearing in *Miscellaneous Needlework - Book No. 24,* one of the many needlework publications available at that time, calls for "purse silk" and "cut steel or colored glass beads" (Fig. 4). Crochet, knitting, and netting silks and cottons formed the purse and created the crocheted background for the design elements. Purses were worked in solid colors or stripes, both vertical and horizontal. Striped purses utilized either contrasting or monochromatic color schemes. The colors used followed the fashion sense of the time, and, of course, personal taste was always a factor.

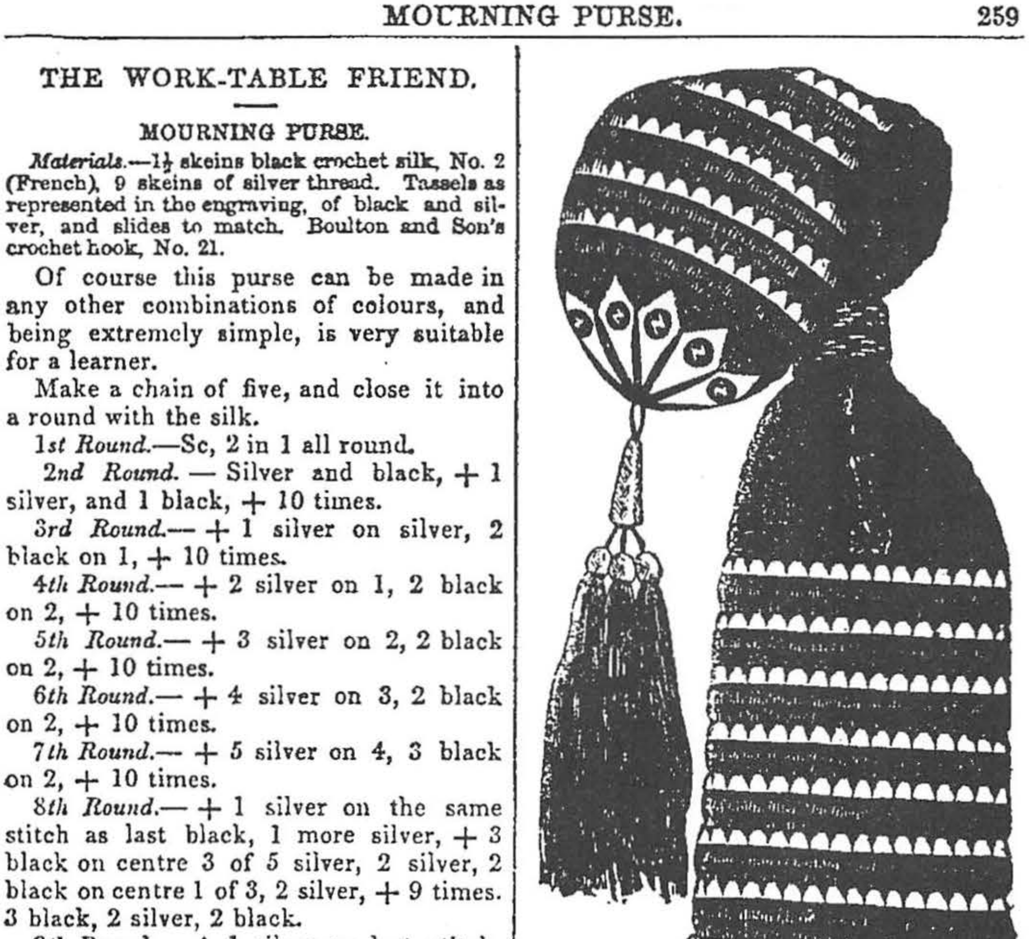
The purses were worked using a combination of crochet stitches, the design motifs being worked in as the crocheting progressed. "Plain" or single crochet was most commonly used in working the purse ends. The center section was worked in some type of mesh stitch, usually "open" or filet crochet. The slides could move easily over this more loosely worked section, but would not be able to slide past the bulkier purse ends. The design elements themselves were most often bands of simple geometric or sampler-like motifs (Fig. 1), although intricate florals and animals occasionally appear (Fig. 3). All-over designs consisting of loops of beads were also common. The design motifs were worked using a variety of techniques. Different colored threads, silver and gold "passing" or metallic threads (Fig. 5), as well as various types of "seed" beads, were employed, giving various effects.

Occasionally, a combination of these methods was used to produce more ornate or complex designs. The beads were either round or cut (faceted), and ranged in size from 18 to 30 beads per inch. Cut steel beads, first introduced in the mid-1840s, were used almost exclusively from that time on. Consequently, steel slides tend to be the most common, but gold and silver, as well as silk-covered metal or bone rings, were also used. Other types of beads, consistently called for in original patterns, included gold and silver (these were generally gilt or silvered glass), "clear white" (transparent), and "Clair de Lune" (opalescent).

Fringes, tassels, large metal beads, and a variety of other garnitures trimmed the ends of these purses, sometimes adding six to eight inches to the length of the purse. Loops of beads and tassels of silk, fashioned from the same materials used in making up the purse, were the most common. Matched sets of slides and tassels, in addition to many other types of trims, were commercially available and needed only to be attached.

Original pattern on next page!

This article first appeared in Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine, *Vol. XI, no. 1 (Spring 1990), pgs. 12-14.*



MOURNING PURSE. 259

THE WORK-TABLE FRIEND.

MOURNING PURSE.

Materials.—1½ skeins black crochet silk, No. 2 (French), 9 skeins of silver thread. Tassels as represented in the engraving, of black and silver, and slides to match. Boulton and Son's crochet hook, No. 21.

Of course this purse can be made in any other combinations of colours, and being extremely simple, is very suitable for a learner.

Make a chain of five, and close it into a round with the silk.

1st Round.—Sc, 2 in 1 all round.

2nd Round. — Silver and black, + 1 silver, and 1 black, + 10 times.

3rd Round.— + 1 silver on silver, 2 black on 1, + 10 times.

4th Round.— + 2 silver on 1, 2 black on 2, + 10 times.

5th Round.— + 3 silver on 2, 2 black on 2, + 10 times.

6th Round.— + 4 silver on 3, 2 black on 2, + 10 times.

7th Round.— + 5 silver on 4, 3 black on 2, + 10 times.

8th Round.— + 1 silver on the same stitch as last black, 1 more silver, + 3 black on centre 3 of 5 silver, 2 silver, 2 black on centre 1 of 3, 2 silver, + 9 times. 3 black, 2 silver, 2 black.

9th Round.— + 1 silver on last stitch, 1 more silver, + 2 black, 1 silver, (on centre of 3 black) 2 black, 2 silver, 1 black, 2 silver, + 9 times.

10th Round.— + 1 black, 3 silver, 1 black, 2 silver, 1 black, + 9 times. The 10th time finish with 2 black.

11th Round.— + 2 silver, 2 black, 1 silver, 2 black, 2 silver, 2 black on 1, + 9 times. The 10th 2 black on 2.

12th Round.— + 1 black, 2 silver, 3 black, 2 silver, 3 black, + 10 times.

13th Round.— + 2 black, 5 silver, 4 black, + 10 times.

14th Round.— + 3 black, 3 silver, 5 black, + 10 times.

15th Round.— + 4 black, 1 silver, 6 black, + 10 times.

16th Round.—All silk, without increase.

17th and *18th Round.*—All silk, + 5 Dc in 1, miss 4 + 22 times. In the 18th and all following rounds, the 5 Dc are worked in the centre of the 5 Dc of the previous one.

MOURNING PURSE, BY MRS. PULLAN.

19th Round.—The same, in silver, with 1 chain between every 5 Dc.

Repeat these three rounds, 2 in silk, and 1 in silver, 5 times.

For the opening, with silk only, + 1 Dc, 1 Ch, miss 1, + work backwards and forwards 20 rows.

Form again into a round, and work the

Fig. 5:
Original pattern for a miser's purse which appeared in Mrs. Warren's and Mrs. Pullan's Treasures in Needlework.

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Gina Thompson *is a past supervisor of the Period Clothing Department at The Henry Ford. She studied commercial and textile arts at the Society of Arts and Crafts, now the Center for Creative Studies, in Detroit, Michigan. She researches and reproduces 19th century knitted and crocheted clothing and accessories.*

Early Nineteenth-Century Tambour Work

by Nancy Torgerson

Tambour work is a type of embroidery used in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.[1] It was first used on cotton muslin and silk for dresses, scarves, curtains, and bed hangings.[2] Machine-made net became available in England in 1809 and in Massachusetts in the 1820s.[3] The tambour stitch and other embroidery stitches were used on this machine-made net to create lace. This lace was most popular in this country from 1810 to 1840.[4]

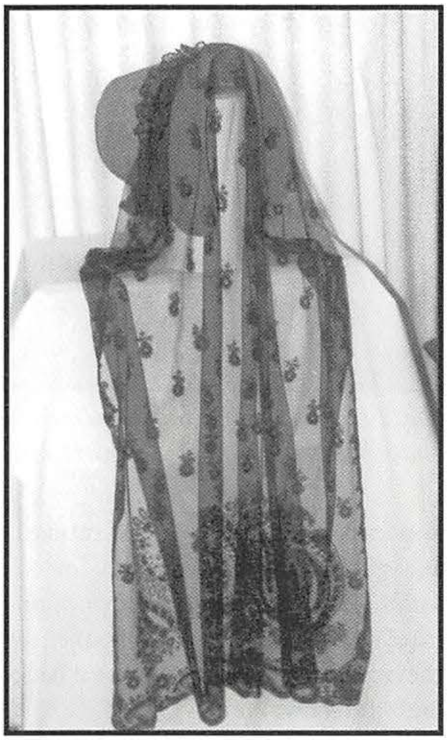
The tambour stitch is similar in appearance to hand worked chain stitching. In doing tambour work the fabric was held taught over a wooden hoop, similar to today's embroidery hoops, but with the inner hoop being wood and the outer one a tightly fitting leather strap.[5] The tambour hoop was mounted on a stand so both hands were free to work.

A special needle, similar to a crochet hook but much finer and sharper, was used in making the stitch. The handle of the needle was frequently hollow ivory in which extra needles could be stored. The needle was held in the handle with a screw.[6] The finger holding the needle could rest on the screw, facilitating the work.[7]

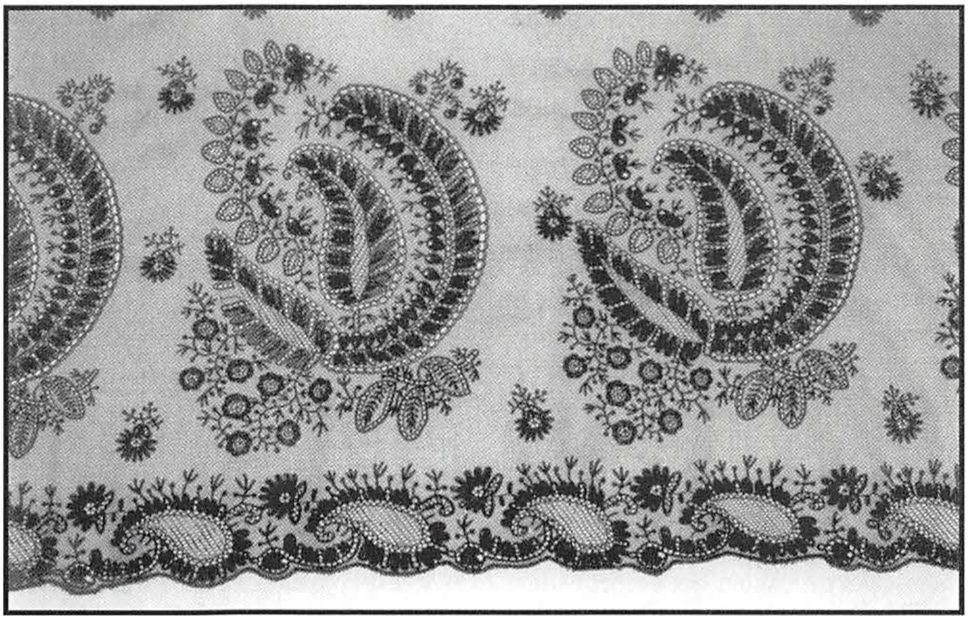
The thread for the decorative stitch was held in the left hand, under the fabric. The stitch was made by pushing the needle through the fabric and picking up a loop of the thread. The loop was pulled to the top, and the needle was again inserted into the fabric a few threads away. Another loop of thread was picked up and pulled through the fabric and the first stitch, creating the chain stitch. The outline area was done first and the center of the pattern was filled in with the tambour stitch or other decorative stitches.[8]

When this stitch was done on net, the pattern was drawn on a lightweight fabric such as fine crepe or mull. This fabric was placed beneath the net and the two were stitched as one. The fabric with the pattern on it was cut away or pulled out thread by thread after the work was finished.[9]

Tambour stitching was frequently used to decorate wedding veils. The veils could have been either black net stitched with black thread or white net with white thread. A narrow border was stitched around the edges, and small flowers or sprigs were stitched over the body of the veil. On one end, which would be the bottom when it was finished, a wider, more heavily decorated border was stitched. The designs were usually flowers, leaves or fruits. At the opposite end a casing was sewn in which a tape could be drawn to attach the veil to a bonnet. Purchased purling was sewn around the entire edge of the veil.[10]



A net veil could have been worn hanging over the front of the bonnet or folded back onto the bonnet brim when desired. This 1820s-1840s net veil (40 ½ inches x 39 inches) is decorated with hand-worked tambour stitching and embroidery. Source: Author's collection.



Net veils were worn hanging over the front of the bonnet or folded back on its brim when desired. A detail of this 1820-1840 veil (40 1/2 inches x 39 inches) shows a variety of stitches including the popular "pine" or paisley pattern. Source: Author's Collection.

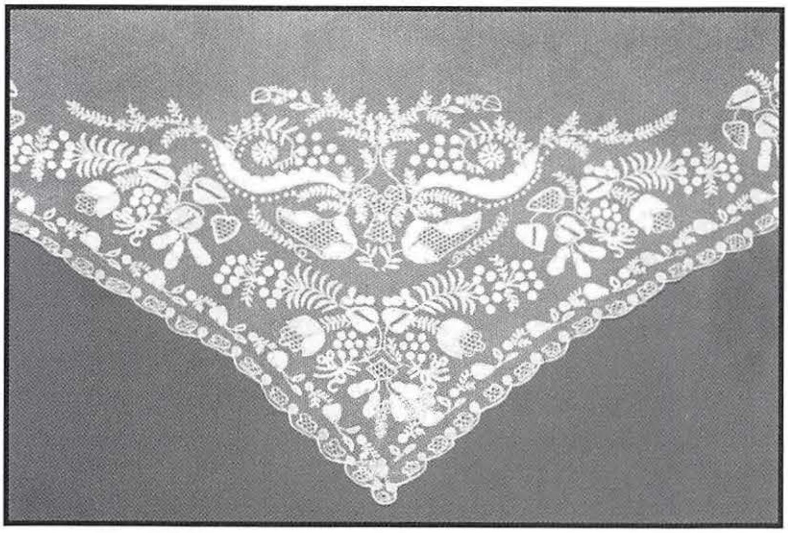


Fig. 2 (Detail): This detail of the collar shows the needlework at the center back and at the point, poorly done repair work.

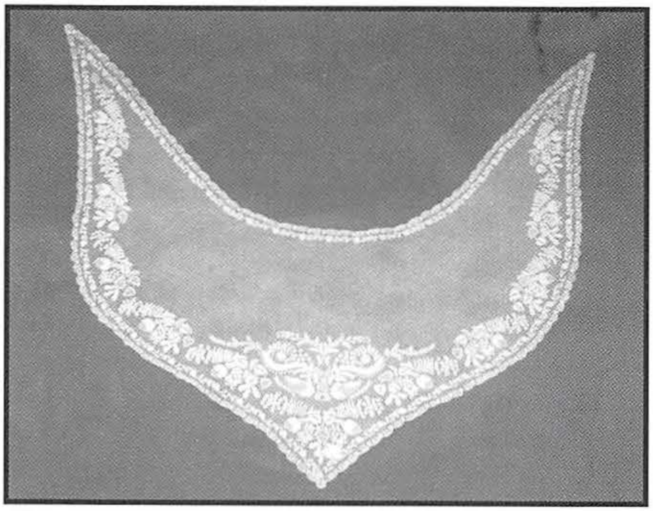


Fig. 2: Hand-worked tambour and embroidery stitches decorate this 1820s-1840s net collar (20 ¾ inches x 21 ¼ inches). Source: Author's collection.

Besides being used for weddings, worked lace veils were also fashionable accessories.[11] The veil could have been worn hanging over the back of the bonnet, over the brim of the bonnet, or folded back onto the bonnet brim.[12]

In making lace net, other stitches were used with the tambour stitch, creating a variety of lacy, open designs, limited only by the skill and creativity of the needle worker. Eyelet and satin stitches, darning and drawn work contributed to the beauty of this needlework. This and other types of needlework were taught at schools in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Litchfield, Connecticut. Both girls (as young as seven) and women made this decorative lace, sometimes for their own use and sometimes for sale.[13]

Besides veils, caps, collars, and shoulder shawls were also decorated with the tambour stitch. However, in 1834 a tambour machine was exhibited in France that stitched with 80 to 140 needles at once making this type of decorative stitching less desirable.[14]

For a number of years women expressed themselves by making lace on net with tambour and embroidery stitches which were beautifully executed. It is a pleasure to see and appreciate the work done by these women, especially when one considers the skill and patience required and the limitations of lighting at that time.

The interpreter wishing to have an elegantly decorated veil, collar, or shawl could use a handworked chain stitch in place of the tambour stitch. Other embroidery stitches for use on muslin and in making net lace are described in *The Ladies' Self Instructor In Millinery & Mantua Making, Embroidery, & Applique* (1853).[15]

Notes.

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3. Virginia Churchill Bath, *Needlework in America* (New York: Viking Press, 1979): 306-307. Emily Noyes Vanderpoel, *American Lace and Lacemakers* (Yale University Press, 1924): 4-5.
4. Weissman and Lavitt, *Labors of Love*, 190.
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11. Weissman and Lavitt, *Labors of Love*, 190.
12. Harbeson, *American Needlework*, 70. Joan Severa, *Dressed for the Photographer* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1995), 49.
13. Vanderpoel, *American Lace and Lacemakers*, 5, 6; plates 37, 60.
14. Weissman and Lavitt, *Labors of Love*, 119.
15. n.a., *The Ladies'SelfInstructor in Millinery & Mantua Making, Embroidery & Appliqué* (1853), 33-42.

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***Nancy Torgerson** is a nineteenth-century historian, consultant, and tailor. Commissioned by museums to make reproduction clothing, she wrote the technical leaflet* Dressing Interpreters at a Living History Site *for the Illinois State Historical Society.*

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Women's Fashion, 1830 -1870
A Simplified Perspective

by Joseph S. Covais

The following pages were compiled and distributed for a lecture I presented at the MOMCC/ALHFAM Interpreter's Seminar. The handout was not intended to provide an in-depth study of fashion. Rather, it was my intention that the simplicity —which focused on four or five important features—would allow an easier grasp of how fashion evolved. The illustrations were selected for being the most typical or representative of the largest portion of the population for that time period. I have deliberately kept the text to a minimum because I want you to concentrate on what you see. That is to say, shapes, profiles, accessories, etc. Look for the small details one time and for the overall emotion or atmosphere at another. Within each group, take notice of hair styles, bonnet shapes, length and shape of skirts and, most importantly, sleeve style. Try to see how these change from decade to decade. Keep these aspects of costume in mind, visualizing the typical shape of each and matching these with each other. Once you have these sorted out in your mind, you will have a foundation for the further expansion of your knowledge.

Although the scope of time periods covered by this survey is somewhat limited, you will hopefully gain an idea of how to analyze pictorial evidence for any period—using genera paintings or photographs—to gain the information you need concerning period clothing.

So keep your eyes open and remember to watch out for those sleeves!

* * *

1830s

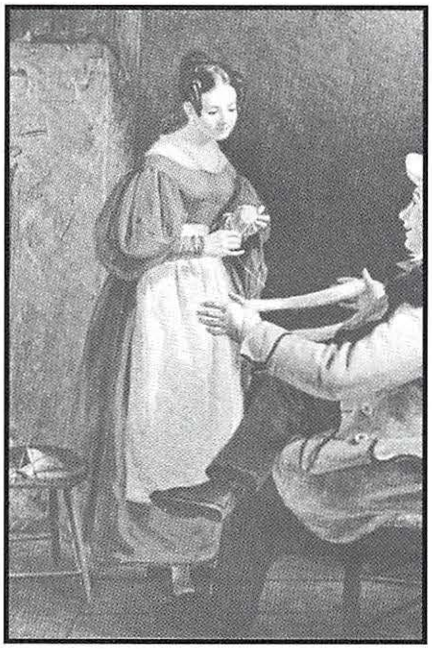
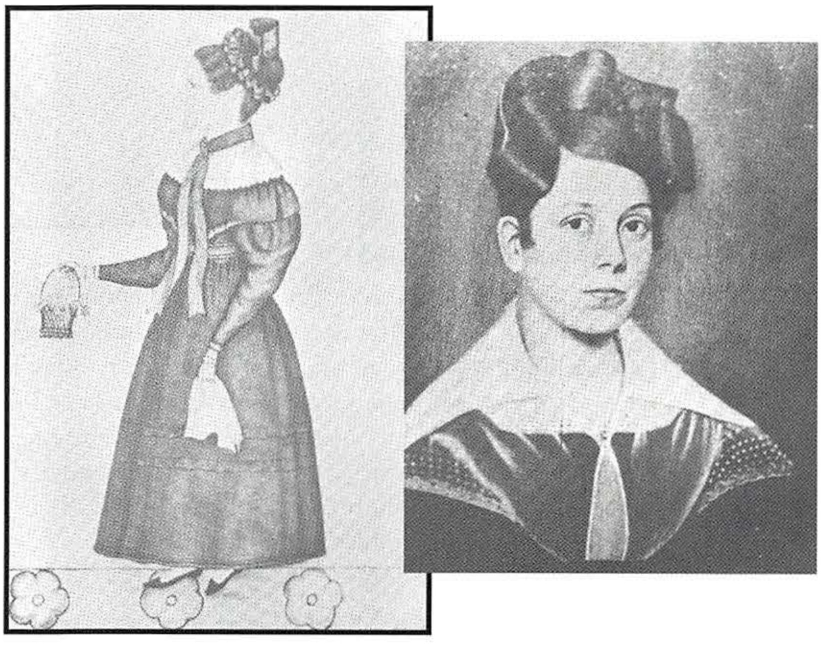


Fig. 1:
A delightful painting by genre painter William Sidney Mount. Executed in 1836, this study shows a very popular style of dress from 1830-38. Notice the wide neck line, high waistline, skirt length and sleeve style. Variations of sleeves with extreme fullness above the elbow are almost a uniform of these years.

Fig. 2 & 3: Two "primitive" folk portraits illustrating hairstyles of the decade. 1830s hair dressing gathers the hair in curls or braids high on the head, frequently with large shell or horn combs and double or even triple parts. The two portraits show well the use of fine cotton pellerines in the 1830s and early 1840s. Fig. 2 shows a chemisette used to fill in the area between the neck and dress.



1840s

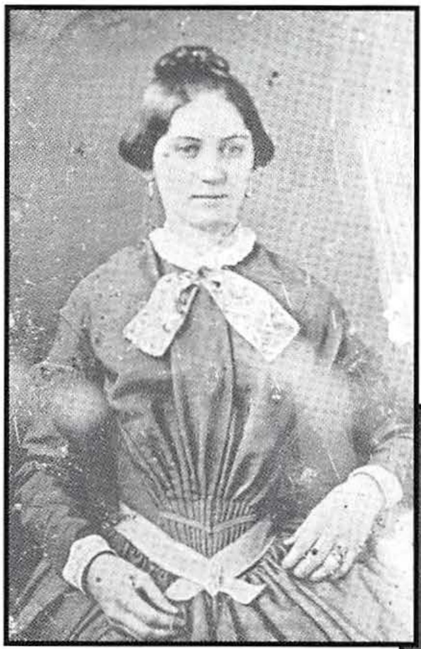
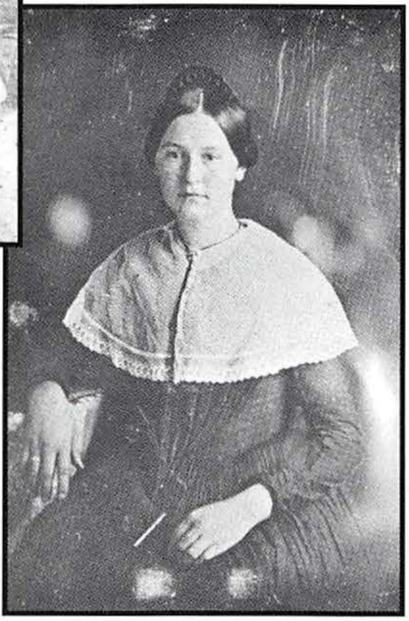


Fig. 4:
An especially nice dagguerrian of about 1845. Waistlines have, by this time, fallen below the natural waist. Be aware of how accessories were used by this woman to enhance her clothing.

Fig. 5 [below]: A very good example of women's dress from the first half of the 1840s. Angular, sharp lines are the desired effect.



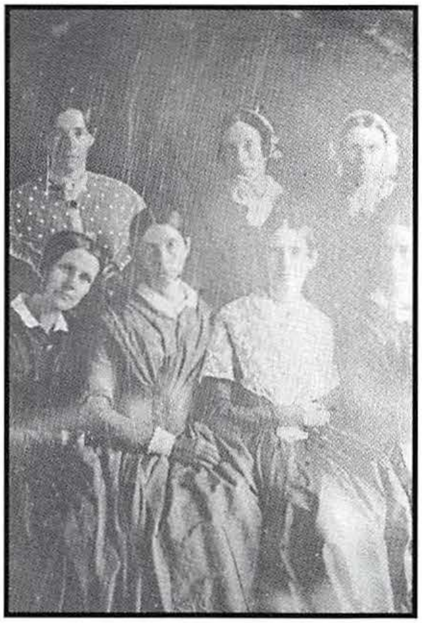


Fig. 6: Seven women of the early 1840s. They all seem to wear a variation of a tight sleeved dress with a gathered bodice. This sleeve (usually with a sleeve cap) was widely used from 1840 until well into the 1850s. All have equally similar hair dressing: oiled, parted in the center, then pulled to the back in a coiled braid or bun. Other details include the still fashionable pellerines and day caps worn by the two older women.

1850s-60s

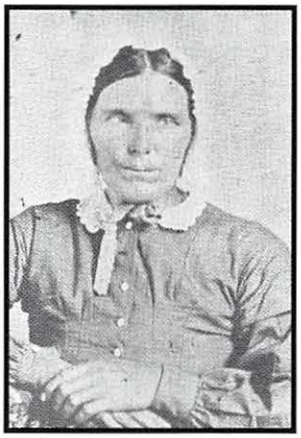
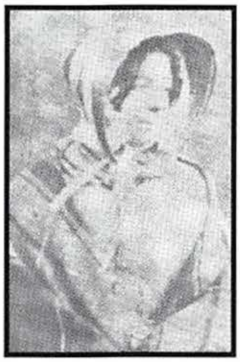


Fig. 7: An ambrotype from Pennsylvania showing the lowest level of costume. The simple button closure of the bodice front would hardly be in fashion at any time. The sleeves are made from large rectangles of fabric, just like a man's shirt sleeve, with buttoning cuffs. The sleeve caps are the only cosmetic feature of the dress which is otherwise utilitarian in its design. It should be noted that the use of printed dress fabric for an apron is unusual.



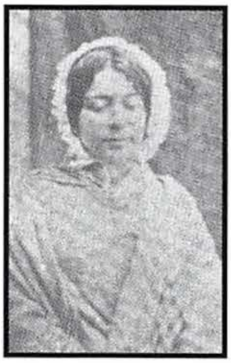


Fig. 8 & 9: Two photos of the same woman. She is very typical of what a large proportion of working-class women looked like through the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s. The woolen shawl and straw bonnet are articles of clothing that were virtually universal; even the poorest women owned and could afford straw bonnets. The day cap worn by this young lady is passing from fashion in the 1850s, being retained for some years by middle-aged women.

This article first appeared in Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine, *Vol. VII, no. 2 (Apr-June 1986), pgs. 14-21.*

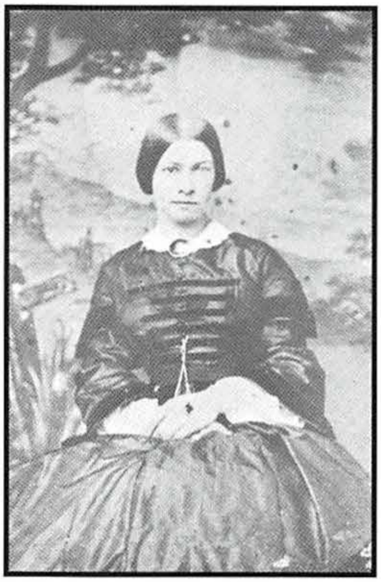


Fig. 10: Fashionable dressing in the 1850s. The "Pagoda" sleeve style required the use of false under-sleeves of some fine white fabric (except for young girls or among the lowest classes).

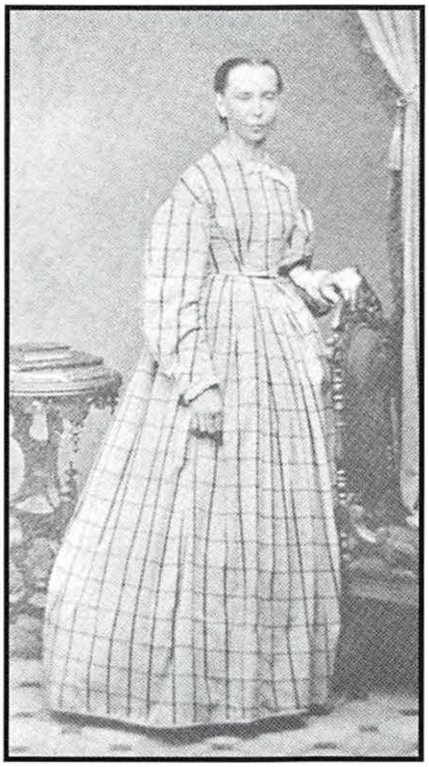


Fig. 11: The 1860s brought a change in sleeve style — tight at the wrist but wide at the elbow. It is called a "Bishop" sleeve.

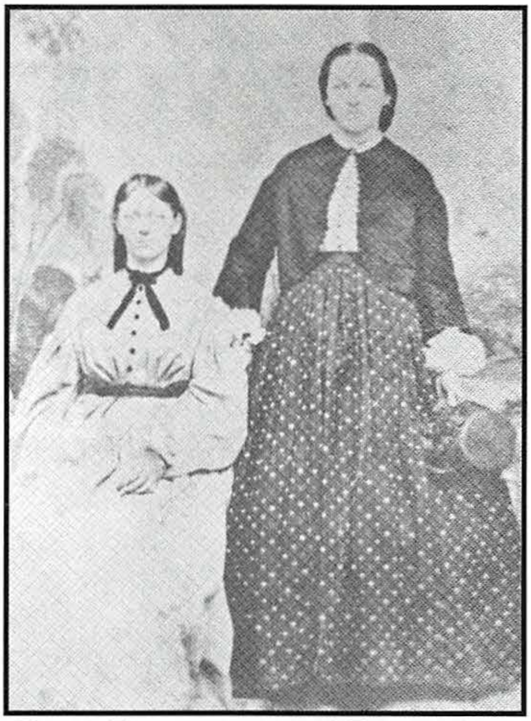


Fig. 12: From 1860 to 1865 Zouave jackets were extremely popular. The wearing of a "blouse" and skirt did see some use during these years but the accepted single piece dress still remained, by far, most common. Waistlines rose to a little higher than the natural waist in the early 1860s, likewise was the hair commonly gathered into a bun or net at the nape of the neck.

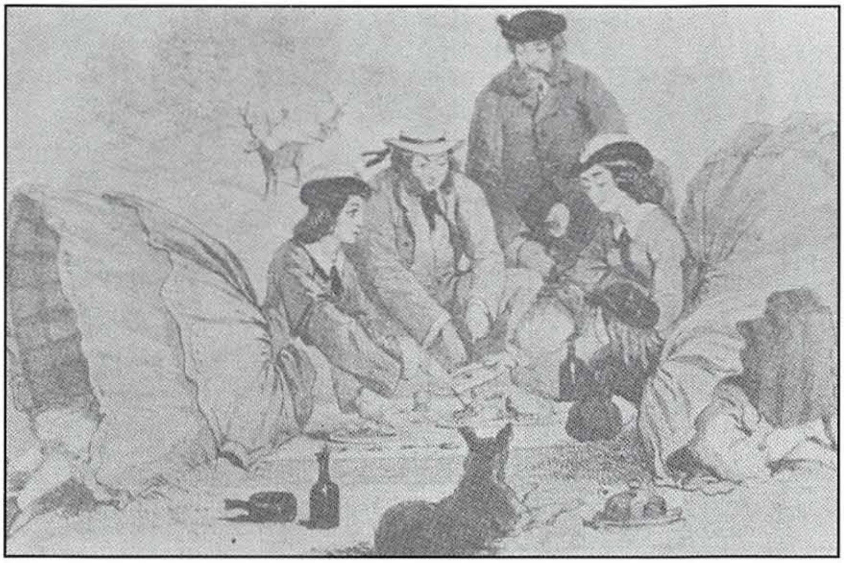


Fig. 13: "The Picnic." Cage crinolines could be awkward at times. Contemporary periodicals are full of cartoons poking fun at the crinoline. Otherwise, notice the hats being worn by the ladies. Bonnets passed from fashion by the end of the 1860s.

Photo Credits (fig. 1- 13): Fig. 1: "Winding Up" by William Sidney Mount, 1836. From Alfred Frankenstein, *William Sidney Mount* (Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1975). • Fig. 2: Unidentified woman c1835. Watercolor attributed to J. Evans. From Robert Bishop, *Folk Painters of America* (Greenwich House, 1979). • Fig. 3: Unidentified woman, c1835. Painted by M. Wilson of Kalamazoo, Michigan. From Bishop, *Folk Painters of America*. • Fig. 4: Woman's portrait, sixth plate daguerreotype from Illinois. Covais collection. • Fig. 5: Woman's portrait, sixth plate daguerreotype from Ohio. Covais collection. • Fig. 6: Seven women. Quarter plate daguerreotype from Ohio. Covais collection. • Fig. 7: Woman's portrait, sixth plate ambrotype from Pennsylvania. Covais collection. • Fig. 8: Inmate at the West Surrey Lunatic Asylum c1852. Taken by Dr. Hugh W. Diamond, From Sander L. Gilman, ed., *The Face of Madness: Hugh W. Diamond and the Origin of Psychiatric Photography* (Brunner-Mazel, 1976). • Fig. 9: Ibid. • Fig. 10: Woman's portrait, sixth plate ambrotype from Georgia, c1855. Covais collection.• Fig. 11: Carte de Visit, taken July 1865 by W. H. Heiss, Strasburg, Pennsylvania, Covais collection. • Fig. 12: Two women, c1862. Taken by W. Renfrew, South Bend, Indiana, Covais collection. • Fig. 13: "The Picnic" c1858, from Norah Waugh, *Corsets and Crinolines* (Theatre Arts Books, 1954).

At Work

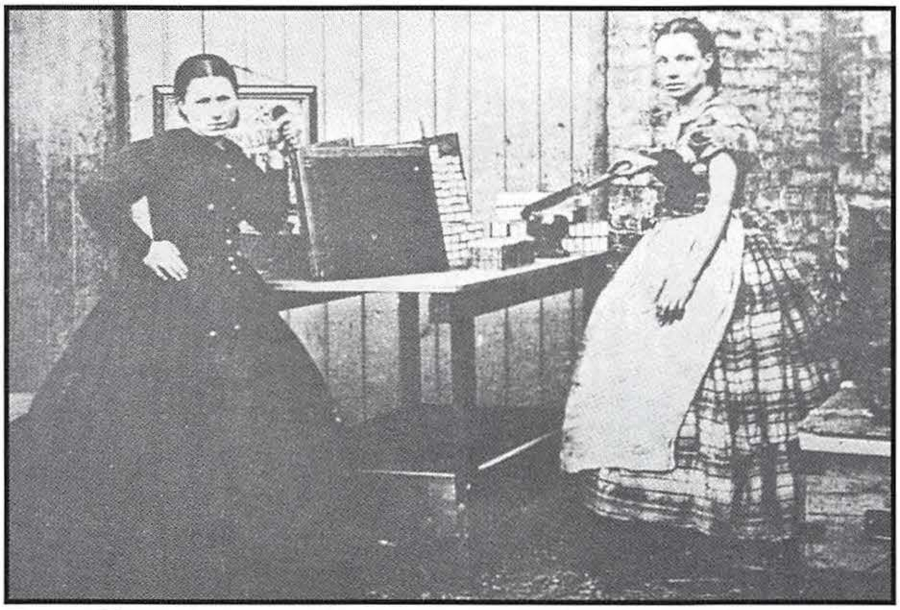


Fig. 14: Taken about 1862 these gals are involved in the manufacture of matches. Though hard at work they insist on wearing cage crinolines! The practice of wearing them at work was so widespread that factory owners were obliged to post broadsides prohibiting their use on the premises.

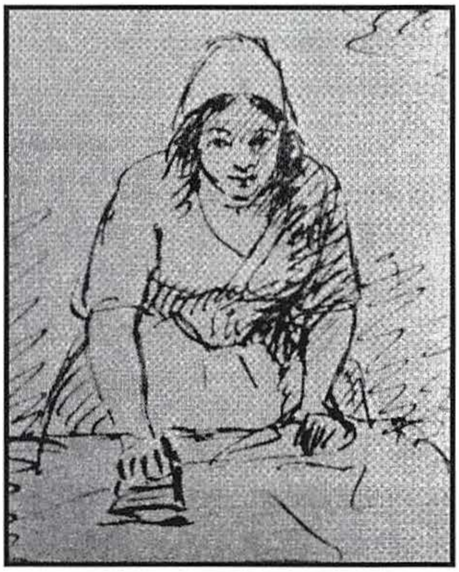


Fig. 15: "Girl ironing" August 29, 1846.

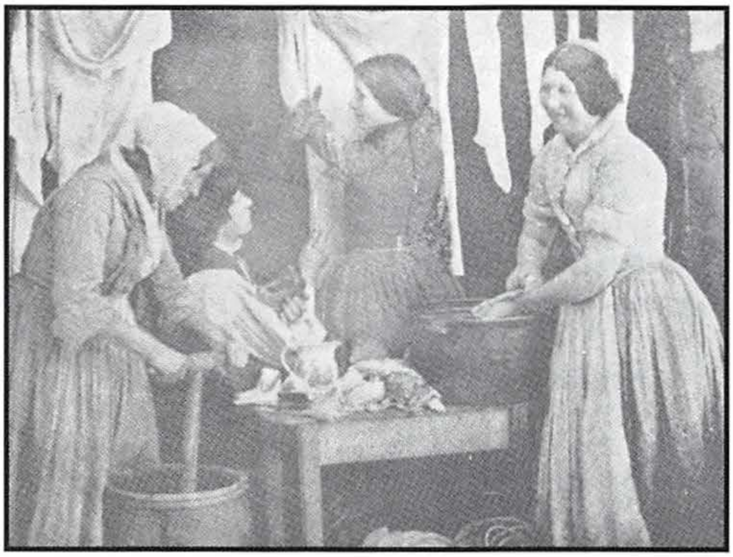


Fig. 16: Though posed in a studio, this albumen print (c1855) was intended to accurately depict the laboring class at work.

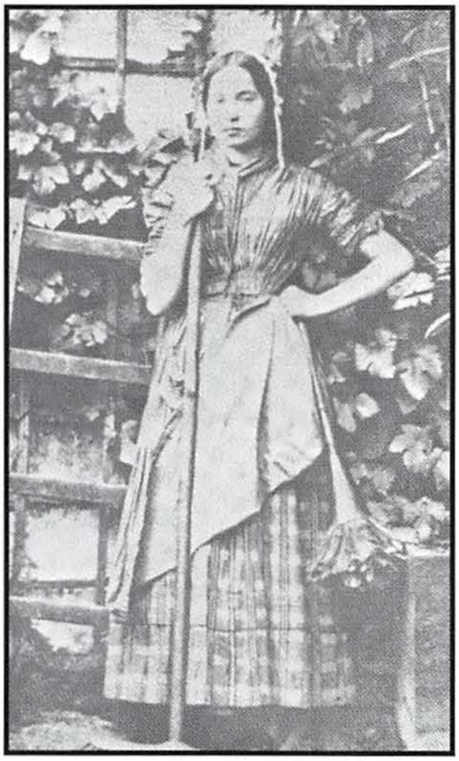
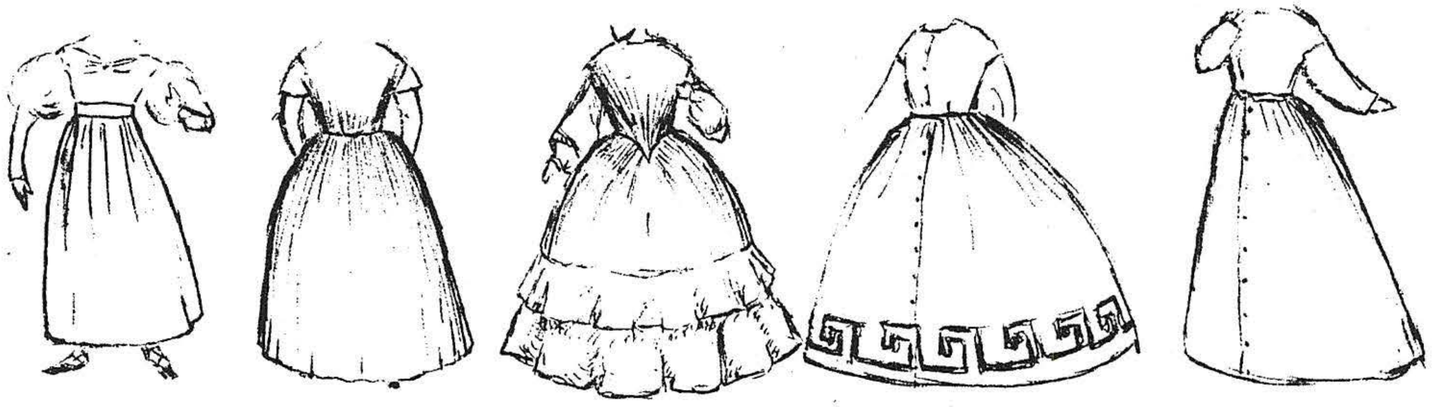


Fig. 17: Servant girl c1860.

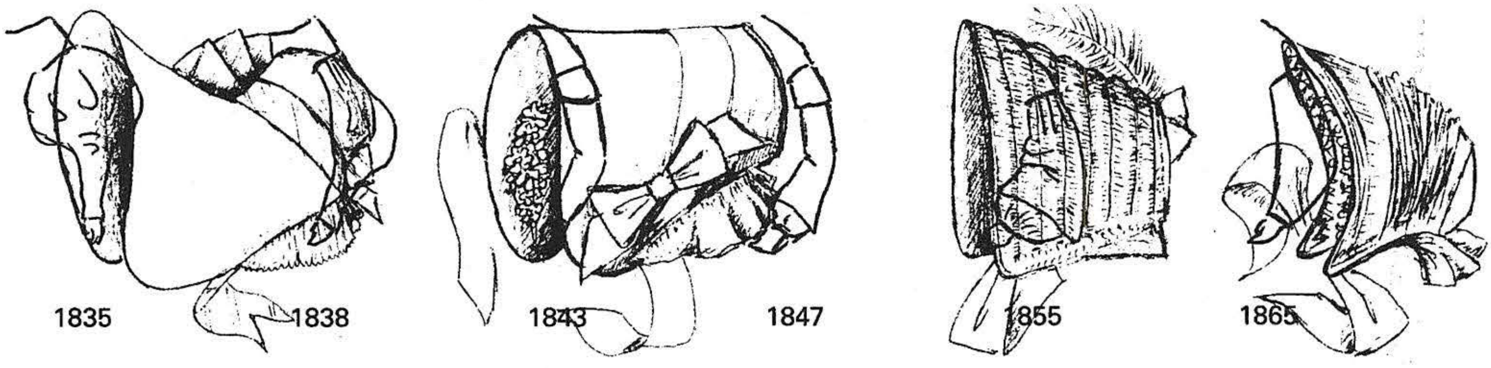
Photo credits (figures 14-16) Fig. 14: Match Girls, English, c1862. From Jane Tozer and Sarah Levitt, *Fabric of Society: A Century of People and Their Clothes, 770-1870* (St. Martin's Press, 1984). • Fig. 15: Girl ironing. Sketch by W.S. Mount, August 29,1846. From Frankenstein, *William Sidney Mount*. • Fig. 16: "All on a Washing Day," originally an albumen print by 0. G. Reijlander, c1855. From Michael Hiley, *Victorian Working Women: Portraits from Life* (David R. Godine, 1979).

During the 1970s and 1980s, ***Joe Covais*** *owned and operated New Columbia in Charleston, Illinois a firm that specialized in reproducing period clothing for museums and individual re-enactors. Active in MOMCC for many years, Joe presented this lecture at the Spring 1986 conference in Galena, Illinois.*



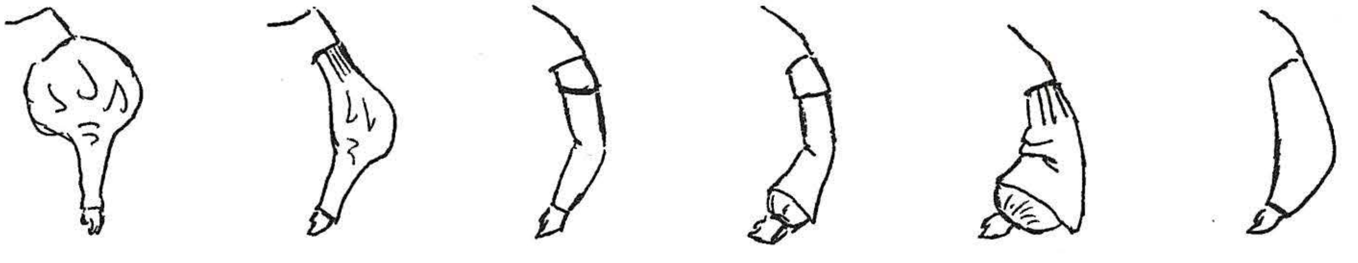
1830's 1840's Late 40's - Early 50's 1855-65 1865-70

Fig. 18: In dresses of the 1830s the skirt is typically ankle length, pleated in front with a small section of cartridge pleating at the back. Skirts lengthen and become fuller after 1838 and continue this trend into the 1860s. Cage crinolines were introduced about 1856 and reached their greatest circumference in the early 1860s. After the Civil War, crinolines diminished in size, changing from a dome to a cone shape. Eventually only that portion of the crinoline covering the derriere was retained (i.e. a bustle).



1830's 1840's 1850's 1860's

Fig. 19: Most typical bonnets for their decade. Bonnets of the 1830's are made in two distinct parts (crown and brim), about 1840 bonnets are made in one part. This style continues through the 1850s but with the front edge receding away from the face. In the 1860s the "spoon" style was predominant.



1835 1838 1843 1847 1855 1865

Fig. 20: Sleeve development from 1830 to 1870.

Sources & Silhouettes for Dressing the 20th Century

by Ericka Mason

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Line drawings and scaled down patterns from original clothing. Works well in conjunction with *Costume in Detail.*

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Foster, Vanda. *Bags and Purses: The Costume Accessories Series.* London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1982. ISBN 0-7134-3772-3

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Color photographs of 1950s fabrics.

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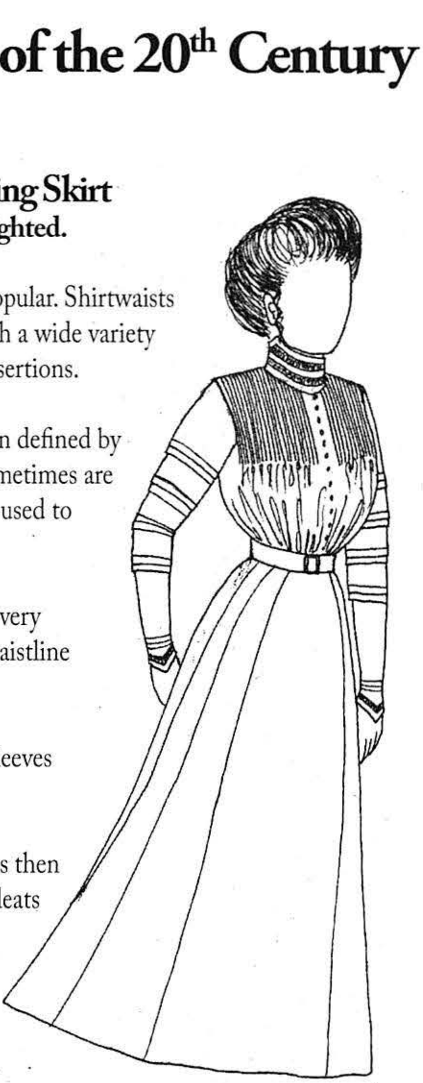
Overview of fashion from 1837 through 1903 including photographs of original dresses.

Source list continued on page 31.

Typical Fashion Details of the 20th Century

Fig. 1: 1900-1908 Shirtwaist and Walking Skirt

Drawn and Compiled by Ericka Mason, copyrighted.



Shirtwaist and skirt combinations become more popular. Shirtwaists (blouses) are often very highly detailed, covered with a wide variety of pin tucks, fine laces, embroidered edgings and insertions.

The shoulder line is at the natural position and often defined by tucks. Necklines are almost universally high and sometimes are shaped to fit the jaw line. Small stays or boning are used to keep the collar high and straight.

The mono-bosom or pigeon-chested look becomes very popular. Shirtwaists are worn to blouse out at the waistline emphasizing the look.

Tucks and insertion lace are often found covering sleeves which are straight and fitted to the arm.

Skirts are cut to fit snugly though the waist and hips then to flare outward towards the hem. Any gathers or pleats are centered at the back.

Skirts are often trimmed in symmetrical detailing from the center front towards the ground and then travelling around the hemline.

Belts are shaped to dip lower in the front than the back emphasizing the pigeon-breasted look.

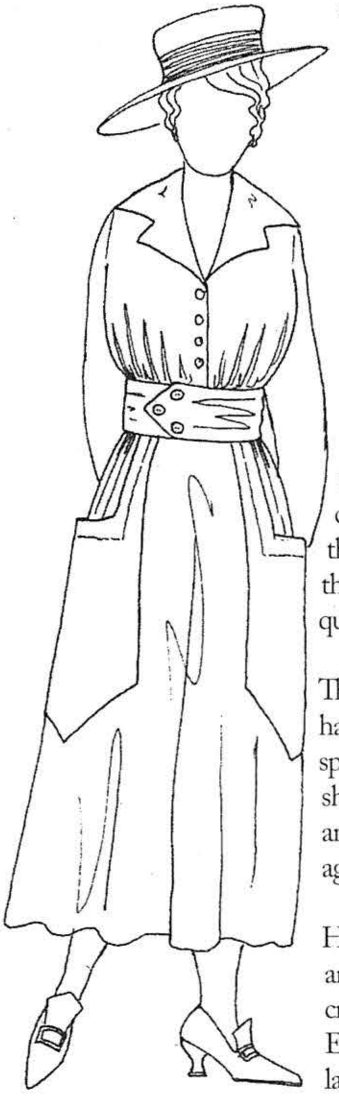
Hair is worn high and full around the head, creating the classic Gibson- girl look.

Hats are large affairs, broad brims adorned with many feathers and flowers.

This article appeared in the Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine *22, no. 1 (2001): 23-27.*

Fig. 2: 1915 Afternoon Dress

Drawn and Compiled by Ericka Mason, copyrighted.



The teen years of the 20th century are very much the transition from the dated fashions of the Edwardian era into the shorter, freer, modern fashions of the 1920s.

This transition from old to new saw the shortening of skirts to mid calf. These full skirts were often adorned with layers of overskirts or large, oddly shaped pockets that hung low across the front of the hips and thighs. In contrast to the large, low pockets, the waistlines were slightly higher than the natural waist and were cut quite wide.

The shirtwaist blouses of the teens had open necklines and often sported large sailor-like collars. The shoulder was still at the natural line and ¾ length sleeves with large exaggerated cuffs were the rage.

Hats were worn lower on the head and had smaller brims and larger crowns than the previous decade. Exotic feathers are no longer popular.

Hair was still long but worn rolled towards the back and placed in a low bun or twist.

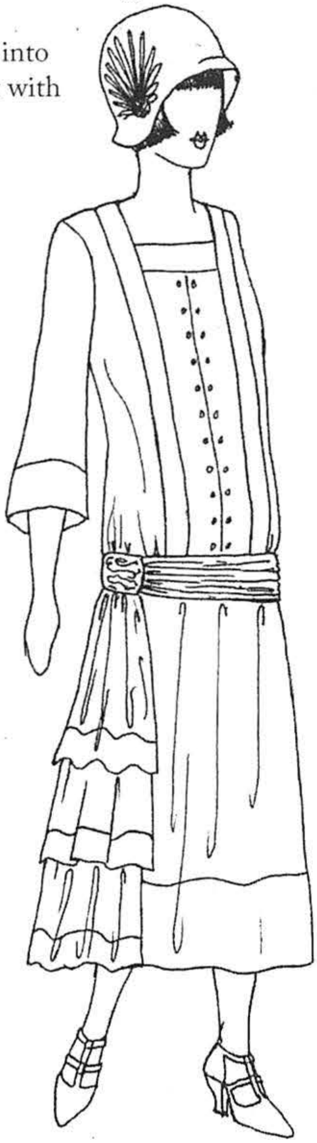
In general the clothing of the teens had a clunky, awkward feel to it, not quite the structured curves of 1900 and not yet the sleek lines of the 1920s.

Fig. 3: 1925 Afternoon Dress

Drawn and Compiled by Ericka Mason, copyrighted

The1920s bring shocking change in women's fashion. The "Flapper Look" comes into vogue. Women bob their hair, shorten their dresses and wear visible amounts of make-up.

The look of the times is very boyish in flavor with flat chests and narrow hips being the ideal. This look is frequently accomplished by using multiple types of fabrics in one dress to draw the eye downward to the waistline. The waistline is dropped to the hips to emphasize the straight no-curves look. Skirts are the shortest ever seen, sometimes reaching just above the knees on more daring women.



Women cut their hair short into bobs or pageboys and curl it with finger waves.

Dark red lipstick becomes popular and is worn in the "bee-stung" style (small pouty lips with exaggerated arches – think Betty Boop). Eyeliner and mascara are also worn along with rouged cheeks.

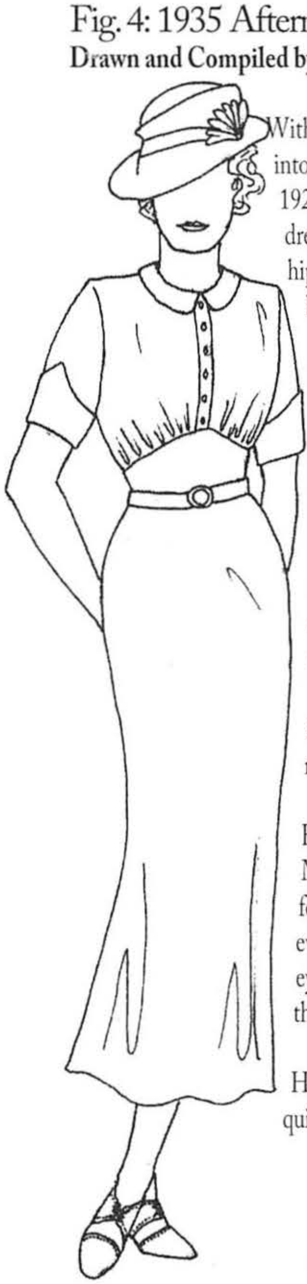
The short cropped hair is covered with sloe fitting hats called cloches. The cloche hat covers all but the face itself.

Long beaded necklaces are also worn to emphasize the straight narrow line of the body.

Shoe toes are pointed at the first of the decade and are rounded by the end. Yet, the shaped Louis heel is seen through the decade. Narrow straps are the most popular style of closure.

Fig. 4: 1935 Afternoon Dress

Drawn and Compiled by Ericka Mason, copyrighted



With the coming of the 1930s curves come back into fashion. In contrast to the boyish figure of the 1920s the women of the 1930s wear very narrow dresses that show off the curves of the torso and hips. Women drape their waists and hips in sleek bias cut dresses. Cutting fabric on the bias allows woven fabric to stretch to fit the shape it covers. Knit dresses become quite popular for this effect as well.

Two-piece suits consisting of a narrow skirt and hip-length jacket are also very fashionable.

Because of the line created by bias draping, closures on dresses are moved to the side seam under the am to allow maximum effect.

Skirts lengthen through the decade reaching down to the mid calf.

Hair is still worn short but is softened with Marcele waves. Lipstick is still popular but now follows a more natural lip line. Eyebrows, however, are all but plucked off and drawn in with eyebrow pencil in a fine half circle above and to the side of the eye.

Hats no longer conform to the head but are still quite small and low on the forehead.

Ericka Mason *worked in the Period Clothing Department at* The Henry Ford, *coordinating period clothing for over 800 staff who interpreted more than 300 years of U.S. history (1750 -1960). She also managed period clothing at* Conner Prairie *before partnering with Ken Osen for life and as co-owner of* Hudson & Allen Studios.

[Continued from page 29]

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Designed for quilters, this book has many color photographs of original cotton fabrics laid out by time period and color. Draw backs are that individual fabrics are not dated and the time periods are quite broad.

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Line drawing patterns. Interesting clothing quotes of the times.

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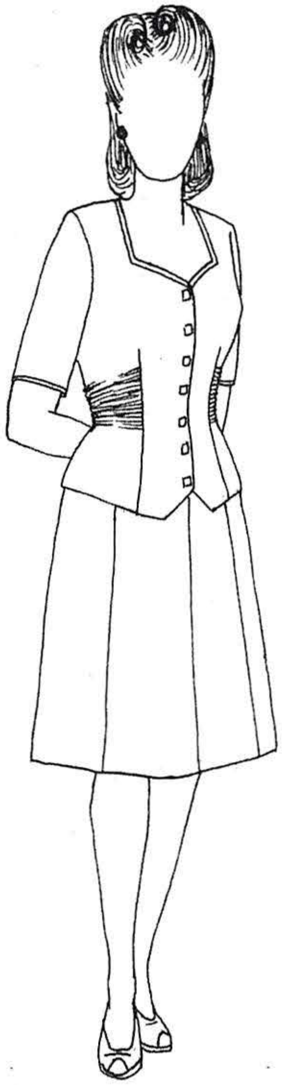
Reprint of a 1917 women's and children's clothing and accessories catalog.

Women's Fashions of the Early 1900s: An Unabridged Republication of New York Fashions, 1909. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992. ISBN 0-486-27276-1

Reprint of a 1909 women's and girl's clothing and accessories catalog.



Typical Fashion Details of the 20th Century
Fig. 5: 1945 Afternoon Dress
Drawn and Compiled by Ericka Mason, copyrighted

The classic style of dress of the 1940s is shaped directly by World War II. With the war came the rationing of almost every conceivable type of goods including fabrics. This rationing brought about the A-line cut and the shortening of skirts to the knees to conserve fabric.

The upper body silhouette of the 1940s was one of broad shoulders exaggerated by shoulder pads and/or slightly puffed sleeves. The sweetheart neckline becomes a hallmark of the day.

Closures to dresses were still often under the am but front and back closures became equally as popular.

Silk stockings are rationed and women take to wearing leg makeup and drawing lines down the center back of their legs in imitation of seamed silk stockings.

Shoes are rounded across the toe and often have platform heels and soles. The wedge type heel becomes very fashionable.

Women's hair becomes longer and is styled in smooth soft waves to the shoulders and behind the ears. The front is drawn away from the face and upward into rolled pompadours held in place with combs and hairpins.

1947 saw the end of war rationing in the fashion world, and skirts got longer and fuller when French fashion designer Christian Dior introduces his "New Look" line of designs. The new look sets the stage for the full skirted, small-waisted look of the 1950s.

Ericka Mason worked in the Period Clothing Department at The Henry Ford, coordinating period clothing for over 800 staff who interpreted more than 300 years of U.S. history (1750 -1960). She also managed period clothing at Conner Prairie before partnering with Ken Osen for life and as co-owner of Hudson & Allen Studios.

CLOTHING COLLECTIONS ON-LINE: THE KENT STATE UNIVERSITY GALLERY OF COSTUME

The Kent State University Gallery of Costume includes a few high-style examples of clothing from three centuries. The university museum is developing an on-line catalog to provide access to all items in the Kent State's extensive clothing collection.

http://www.kent.edu/museum/collection/gallery-of-costume.cfm

A Pocketful of History

by Beth Turza

Needlework has long been a source of pride for the American homemaker as she created clothing for her family and linens and bed-clothing for her home. Many examples of embroidery and piecework can be found in museum collections today attesting to the many hours spent by needle workers of the past in creating works of art in textile mediums.

Pockets provide a good example of the diversity of women's needlework during the 18th and 19th centuries. Worn either single or in pairs, pockets were generally tied about the waist with hand-woven tape. They were worn beneath a woman's petticoats but were not sewn into garments until about the 1840s. They served as a safe place to carry valuables and necessities. As purses were not yet in use during the 18th century, pockets are considered to be the forerunner of the purse.

Tracing the history of pockets back to their humble beginnings shows that they generally mirrored the current needlework trends of the times.[1] During the 18th century, embroidered crewel pockets worked upon linen were popular.[2] This was a time when many women prided themselves on intricately embroidered bedclothes, gowns, and waistcoats.

As the 18th century progressed, other forms of needle-art were reflected in the pocket. Quilted pockets gained popularity and were probably inspired by the meticulously designed petticoats of silk that were being worn with open robes or gowns. The Williamsburg, Virginia collection has a fashion doll, ca. 1770, whose intricate wardrobe includes a matching quilted pocket and petticoat.[3]

The Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village collection in Dearborn, Michigan, has a single pocket of sky blue taffeta that was quilted and lined with black and white striped glazed linen. The pattern is symmetrical in design and defines the opening. The pocket measures 14 inches in length and 10.75 inches at the widest point. As is the case with single pockets, the tape is sewn with unequal ties so that when tied in the center front, the pocket hangs at either the left or right hip.

While the pocket continued in popularity in rural areas in the early 1800s, it fell into disuse by fashionable women during this period due to the contours of the fashionable skirt following the contours of the body. According to C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington in *The History of Underclothes:*

"An observer in 1805 remarked that it was out of the question for ladies to wear pockets. When in a novel of 1817 a countrified lady admits to having a pocket, it provoked the comment: 'Your pocket, Madam! Do you wear a pocket?' 'Absolutely,' tittered a lady behind her chair, 'she confesses to wearing pockets.'"[4]

During this perio placed by the purs the small size and c early reticules, it is not surprising that the pocket saw a revival in the 1820s. Many collections contain white linen and cotton pockets, both plain and striped, which were popular during this period and which were considered part of the underpinnings.

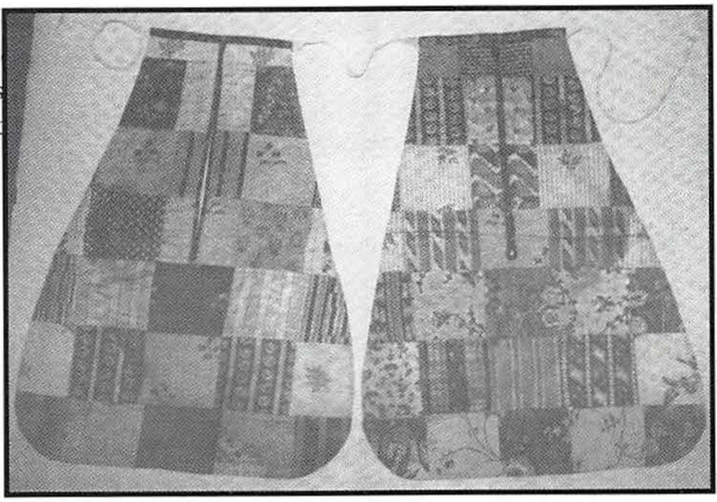


Fig. 1: Pre-1820s patchwork pocket. Source: The Henry Ford Museum.

Photograph by author.

Near the end of the 18th century, block-printed chintzes of cotton and linen were becoming fashionable in gowns as well as in decorator fabrics. Scraps of these materials would accumulate since it was considered wasteful to discard precious textiles. Piecework pockets began to make their debut. Quilt-like in appearance, they were pieced and backed by cotton or linen before the front was assembled to the back of the pocket. The back was less important and as previously mentioned was often composed of pieced linen scraps.

These patchwork fronts were diversified — no two pockets were quite alike despite many needle workers' attempts at making matching pairs. The available scraps of brightly colored florals and geometrics were arranged both symmetrically and asymmetrically. They were sometimes cut of equal sizes or fitted together in a manner similar to late 19th century crazy quilts.

A pair of patchwork pockets, involving an assortment of woodblock prints, can also be found in the Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village collection (**Fig. 1**). Dating pre-1820s, they measure 16.5 inches long by 5.5 inches wide at the top and 12.5 inches across the widest point at the bottom (see pattern included with this article). These pockets are composed of pieces that measure 2.5 inches by 2.75 inches (**Fig. 2**) and that have been arranged, to some extent, into a pattern where every other patch is of a matching print. Several of the patches have multiple piecing in order to make a patch of the proper size. Believed to be of American origin, these pockets are predominated by the colors of brown, black, rose, beige, turquoise, and white. The pocket backs have had the initials of the owner cross-stitched on (**Fig. 3**).

The patchwork pocket remained a popular item into the mid-19th century in rural America.[5] Metamora Courthouse State Historic Site houses a pair of well-worn circa 1837 patchwork pockets (**Fig. 4**). They are documented as being from the rural Midwest and accession records indicate that they were made and worn by a Mrs. Randolph Scott when she was a young lady. They appear to have worn out in places and the affected portions have been replaced. This is especially evident around the pocket opening as well as in the fabric ties which are replacements. The extensive wear and repair might indicate that they were worn outside the dress and, as such, were used for domestic purposes.

The 1838 *Workwomen's Guide* includes several illustrations of pockets along with directions for making them. According to the *Guide*, "Pockets are either worn tied round the waist, fastened into the petticoat, or buttoned upon the stays. When fastened into the petticoat, they are made of the same material, otherwise of dimity, calico, jean, twilled muslin, and sometimes of nankeen or brown jean."[6]

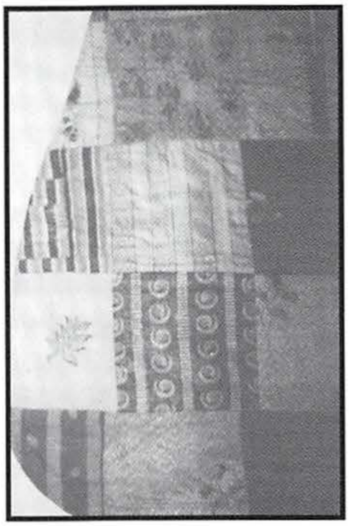


Fig. 2: Detail of patches on pre-1820s patchwork pockets.

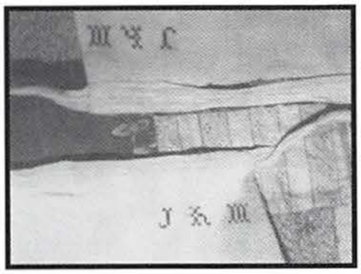


Fig. 3: Initials on back of pre-1820s patchwork pockets.

Photographs by author.

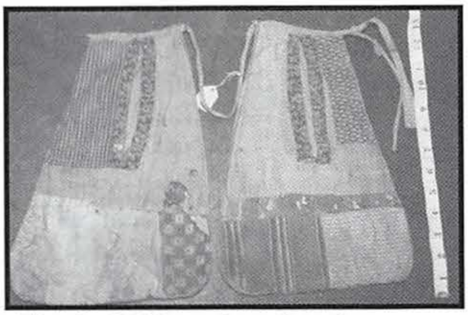


Fig. 4: c1837 patchwork pocket, Metamora Courthouse, Illinois.

By the 1840s, pockets began to be sewn into the side seams and were undetectable in the many folds of the full skirts. The tied-on variety of pockets, however, were still being manufactured commercially and sold as late as 1857 as an article to be used by travelers to keep their money safe beneath their skirts.[7]

ENDNOTES

1. Linda Baumgarten, *Eighteenth-Century Clothing at Williamsburg* (Virginia: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988), pp. 14, 17, 19.
2. Nancy Bradfield, *Costume in Detail, 1720-1930* (Boston: Plays, Inc., 1968), pp. 34, 167.
3. Baumgarten, p. 14.
4. C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington, *The History of Underclothes* (London: Michael Joseph LTD., 1951), p. 118, 119.
5. Old Sturbridge Village, *The Garb of Country New Englanders 1790-1840* (Conn.: Meriden Gravure Co., 1966), p. 147.
6. A Lady, *The Workwoman's Guide* (London: Simpkin-Marshall, 1838), p. 73.
7. Cunnington, p. 16.

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This article first appeared in Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine, *Vol. XI, no. 4 (Winter 1990), pgs. 14-17.*

Instructions & Pattern of the Wood-blocked Pair of Patchwork Pockets

The original blocks are irregular and measure 2 ½ inches by 2 ¾ inches with a ¼ inch seam then added. Beginning at the bottom, make horizontal strips of blocks and then join these strips to measure larger than the pattern size. Prepare the right pocket as well. Laying right sides together and centering the pattern over the center blocks, cut out patchwork fronts and four linen backs. The backs could be pieced for historical interest.

Assemble the pockets by backing the patchwork fronts with one of the linen backs, cutting a 9 inch slit down the center top. Bind this with a narrow strip of printed fabric, turn to the inside and hem. Placing right sides together, sew the front to the second linen piece and sew ¼ inch from the edge. Turn right side out and press, then topstitch close to the edge with a running stitch. Bind the top edge with a printed fabric strip. Sew a woven tape to the top back of the pockets, arranging them over each hip and allowing enough tape to tie in center front.

Additional construction techniques that incorporate some variations come from *The Workwoman's Guide* and *Rural Pennsylvania Clothing*.

"The two pieces of the pocket are run firmly together all round, at a little distance from the edge, on the wrong side. It is then turned inside out, the seam well flattened, and back-stitched all round with white silk about a quarter of an inch from the edge. The top is set into a broad piece of tape, which is doubled over it and forms the strings also. The slit is hemmed or backstitched neatly down." *The Workwoman's Guide*, p. 73.

"Cut out the front and back pieces. Following the line on the pattern, cut the slit in the front piece only. Hem this slit with a quarter inch hem or bind with self or contrasting bias tape. Place wrong sides together and bind the entire pocket with self or contrasting tape." *Rural Pennsylvania Clothing*, p. 74.

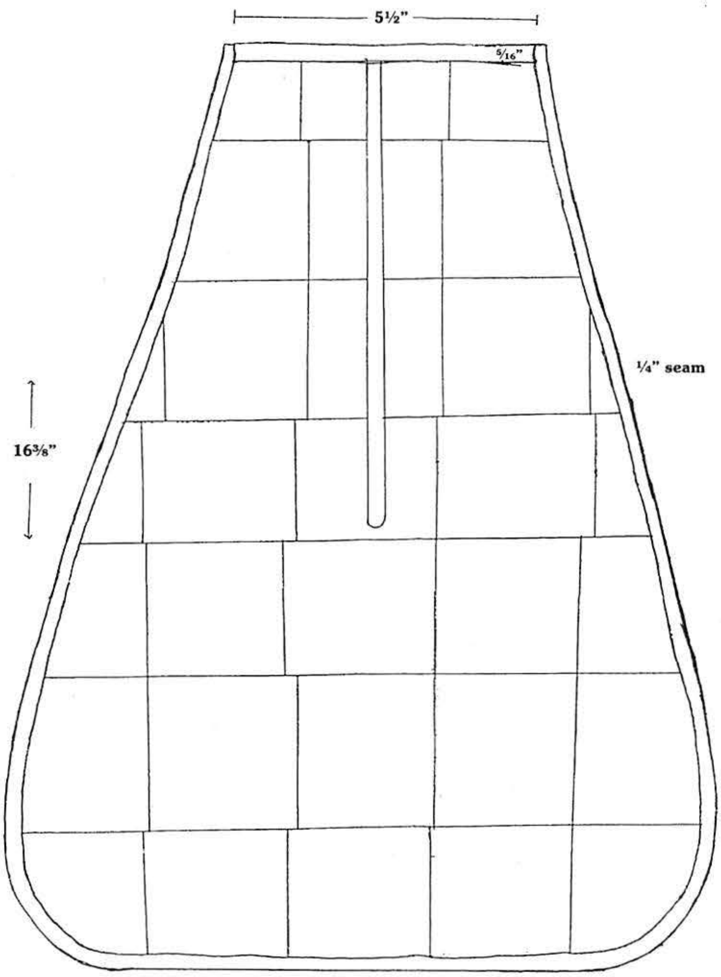


Figure 5. Pattern of the wood-blocked pair of patchwork pockets shown in Fig. 1. (Left pocket, 1/2 scale, ¼ inch seam included).

***Beth Turza** collects and replicates historical clothing She studied history of costume at Madonna College in Livonia, Michigan. Her interest in replicating bonnets led her to develop patterns and workshops in historical millinery which she has presented at various Midwestern historic sites and at MOMCC and ALHFAM meetings. Beth has volunteered at the Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village in the domestic arts collection.*

Disposable Shoes: Two Turn Shoe Examples

by Thomas G. Shaw

We are used in the late twentieth century to the concept of disposability in clothing. The relative cheapness of all manner of wearing apparel and its ease of replacement upon desire are advertised to us daily.

We do, however, not usually associate this concept with earlier times. In this we are not far wrong. Until recently in the United States, clothing has been rather expensive. Indeed, the case is still true throughout most of the world. In the era of hand-sewn clothing, materials were dear and the garments time consuming to make. The growing ready-made industry in the nineteenth century ameliorated this to some extent. Nevertheless, much extant original clothing is either in near mint condition from never having been worn or in heavily worn and repaired condition.

One item of clothing which was literally disposable from the beginning was the lady's dress slipper. Commonly referred to as *turn shoes* because of their mode of manufacture, they were by their very nature delicate in appearance and very fragile. The uppers were closed using some soft, light material such as silk or fine leather. The interiors were almost always lined in light, white linen and the edges bound with silk tape. To attach the thin leather sole, the shoe was turned inside out over the last and the sole tacked with the outside against the bottom. A channel was cut around the perimeter of the sole and a rabbit was made along the outer edge to ensure a thin profile. The upper was then stitched directly to the sole. The shoe was then removed from the last and turned right side out. An insole of thin leather or linen was cut and glued inside to cover the stitches and allow the foot a smooth resting surface. In practice, two silk tapes were sewn to the lining near the side seam, close to the upper edge. These were criss-crossed over the lower leg and tied in front with a bow to secure the shoe.

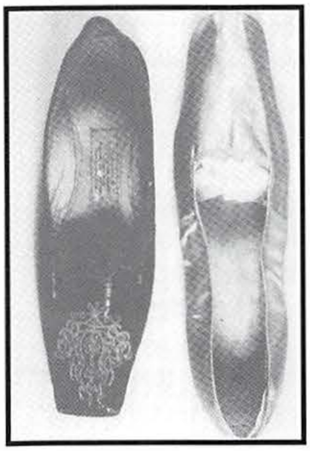


Fig. 1: Two women's turn shoes from the 1840s show the narrow, delicate lines distinctive of the time.

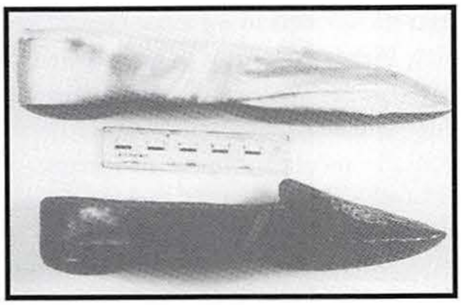


Fig. 2: Side views of both shoes reveal the angled side seam common in such shoes.

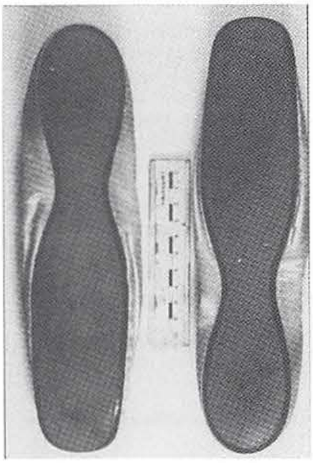
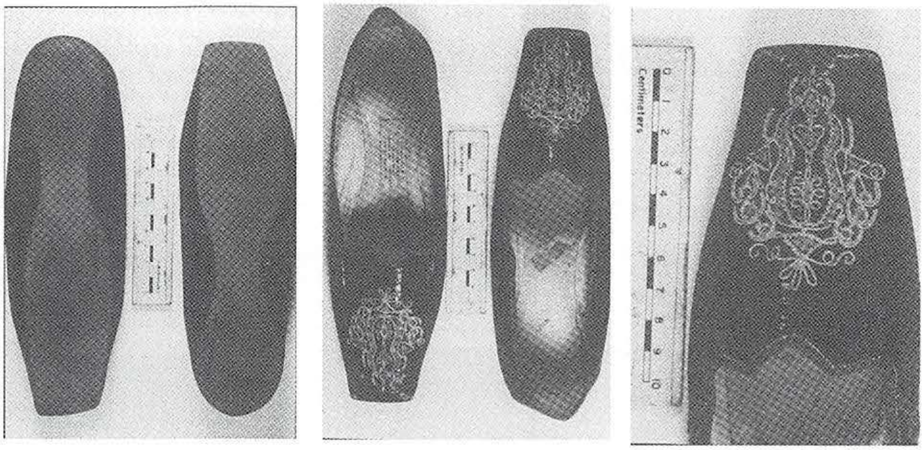


Fig. 3: Bottom view of the white satin shoes shows the use of a straight last, and the long straight toes used to give the narrow appearance. Note also the diamond-shaped rolletting round the edge of the sole.

These shoes were never made with heavy outdoor wear in mind. The materials used to construct the uppers and sole were far too thin to admit of this. Furthermore, when weight is placed on the shoe the lower sides of the upper spread over the sole and come in contact with the ground. On shoes which show some wear, there is always a line of abrasion along the edge of the sole right where the ball of the foot would rest. These shoes were made to be worn indoors for special occasions. One would have to be quite wealthy to walk outdoors in them and expect them to resist this abuse more than a couple of times.

Indeed, most of the examples encountered today are in unworn condition. The relatively few encountered which are worn are in very poor shape. Such is the case with the two specimens show here. The white silk satin pair is of a material often seen today. They are lined in lightweight white linen and trimmed with white silk tape. Light leather heel linings are sandwiched between the outer and the lining and likely sewn around the lower edges which are now inside. The forward slanted seams which join the vamp to the quarter are typical of this type of shoe. Two parallel lines of top-stitching on either side of the seam suggest that a piece of tape or some other sort of stay is sewn inside to reinforce the seam. The very contoured velvet finished soles are also typical of the type. In this case they have a lovely decorative edge bevel and some diamond-shaped rolletting pressed around the arch (**Fig. 1, 2, & 3**).



(Left to Right) Fig. 4: The black leather pair, though more decorated above have plainer soles. They also show the use of a straight last.
Fig. 5: The black leather pair is decorated with cutouts and machine sewn chain stitching, and has both manufacturer's and retailer's labels in place.
Fig. 6: Detail of the cutouts and machine sewn chain stitching which decorate the upper.

While these shoes appear impossibly narrow, they do exhibit the fashionable silhouette of the 1820s. Fashion plates of the time show ladies with delicate feet and narrow, flat toes. The shoes do spread out somewhat at the ball when weight is put on them. The flat toe likely extends beyond the end of the wearer's toe since there is virtually no room in the final inch and a half. No maker's or seller's labels are intact though there is a suggestion that a label was at one time affixed to the bottom of the one shoe. It should be observed here that these shoes are *straights* - each shoe will fit either foot. This form of lasting emphasizes the narrow appearance. Both pairs of shoes illustrated here are quite small (as are many of the extant originals), which might suggest that the reason they exist is because they were too small to sell.

The second pair of shoes is constructed of fine black-dyed leather with black silk ribbon trim. The toes are decorated with an intricate cut-out outlined in machine-sewn chain stitches and backed with red silk. The interior is lined in white linen with an insole of the same material. The heel counter is executed in the same manner as in the white silk shoes. A piece of black silk tape trims and strengthens the side seams (**Figs. 1, 2, 4-8**).

While the uppers of this pair are more elaborate than the other, the soles are considerably plainer. The leather is velvet finished as well but there is no further embellishment. The holes made by the tacks which positioned the sole on the last are plainly visible (**Fig. 4**).

Stylistically, the flat *sharp* toes suggest a date near the end of this style of shoe's heyday, about 1840-45. This is affirmed by documentary information gleaned from the manufacturer's and retailer's labels which are still affixed (**Fig. 7**). The manufacturer was the firm of *S. Driver, Jr, & Co.* of Salem, MA. City directories show this concern first as *Lawrence & Driver* in 1837. By 1842 it was listed as S. *D., Jr. & Co. Boot & Shoe Manufacturer.*[1]

These shoes were manufactured in the heart of Massachusetts by the firm of C. C. *Chickering*, located at 142 Main in Worcester. The earliest city directory listing this firm dates from 1845 and confirms the address. This listing continues until 1851 went it appears that Mr. Chickering changed careers and began work as a railroad conductor. These dates confirm the stylistic characteristics of the shoes (**Fig. 8**).

Turned shoes are a form of footwear not familiar in our world. In the early nineteenth century they were quite fashionable and relatively common. While the two pairs shown here are typical of their type, they also reflect survival biases inherent in all collections. They survive in part because they were fashionable, expensive and, perhaps, unwearable.

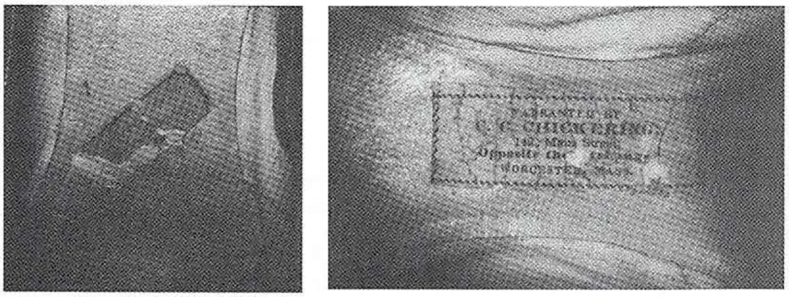


Fig. 7: Manufacturer's label for "J. Driver, Jr. & Co." helps date their manufacture to 1842 at the earliest.
Fig. 8: The retailer's label, a firm in business from 1845 to 1851.

Notes

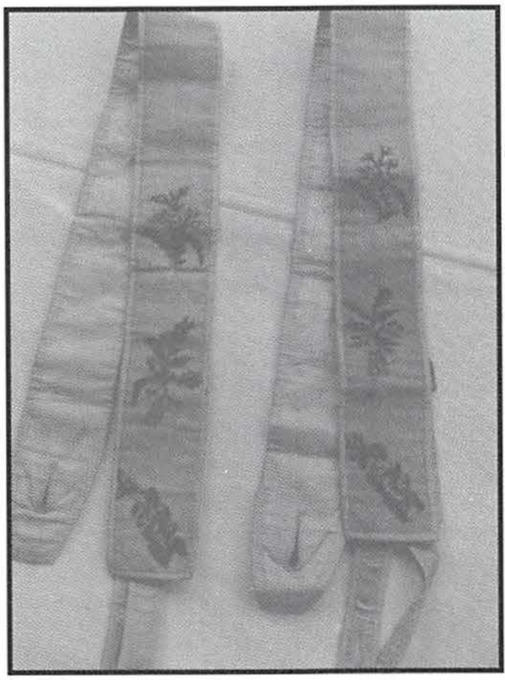
1. The author is indebted to Ms Lynne Bassett, Curator of Textiles and Fine Arts at Old Sturbridge Village for the information on the manufacturer and retailer. A pair of bottines (turned-shoes with an ankle-high upper which lace up the inside of the ankle) in the OSV collection bear the label of DRIVER & CO. Manufacturers Salem, Mass. This style of ladies' shoe became fashionable in the 1840s.

This article appeared in the Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine *19, no. 2 (1998): 17-19.*

"A Present from Lillie Stille"

by John Graf

The garments found in today's museums are usually more typical of special occasions or manufacture. Be aware of that when studying historic clothing. It is rare to find extant pieces of utilitarian or everyday clothing. When such an item does come to light, it is of great value to the historian not only for what it tells about a particular individual, but also for what it tells about how the lower or middle classes of a particular period dressed.



Photographs by Joe Covais.

Fig. 1: Embroidered braces made by Lillie Stille, October 20, 1842.

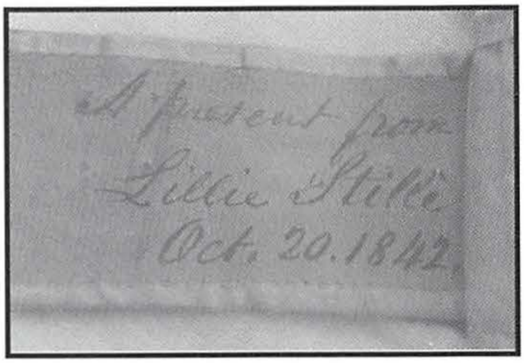


Fig. 2: Detail of inscription found on the inside of the adjusting strap of one of the braces.

A pair of braces in the private collection of Joseph S. Covais is such an item (**Fig. 1**). Graciously, the original maker signed and dated her work, imparting the only tangible information on the braces' original provenance: "A present from Lillie Stille, Oct. 20, 1842" (**Fig. 2**). Nothing more about the braces is known other than they were purchased by Mr. Covais at a Midwestern flea market.

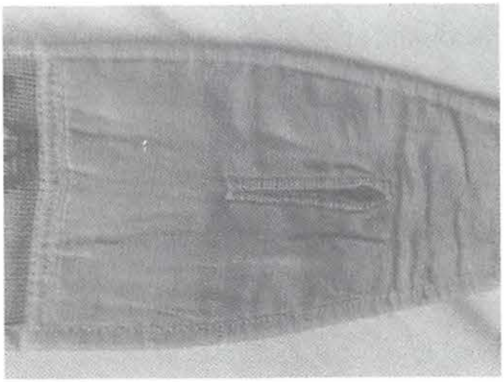


Fig. 3: Detail of the back of the braces showing three rows of stitching attaching the leather reinforcer to the brace.

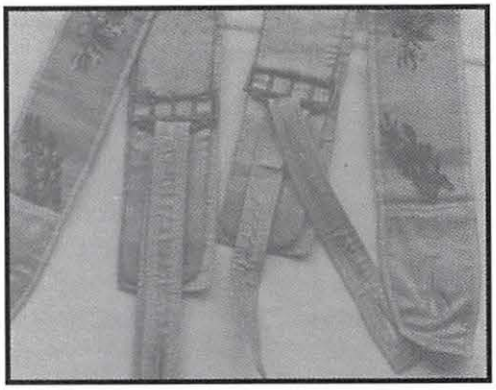


Fig. 4: Backside of the braces showing the adjusting strap, buckle, and button strap.

These braces, however, impart to the scholar a brighter picture of nineteenth-century life. Not all was drab frockcoats with an occasional brocade vest, for the recipient of Ms. Stille's gift wore these braces on numerous occasions as evidenced by the sweat stains on the reverse side and the tracts left by the adjusting buckles.

As they are rarely seen by other than the wearer, reproducing such a pair of braces would not seem to be a worthwhile endeavor. But for the living history interpreter, the depth of his impression will help him convey to the public how a nineteenth-century man appeared. If concealed under a vest as they should be in most cases, these braces may never be seen. But if the interpreter engages in any form of physical labor, his braces will often slip down his shoulder. If the interpreter is wearing a pair of elastic suspenders like the ones seen at the local farm supply store, the public will realize that the depth of the impression is not there. If, however, they see a pair of embroidered or tape-edged cloth braces, the magic of the impression will be maintained.

Ms. Stille's braces offer living history participants a good model on which to base reproductions. The embroidered braces are made of three layers of material: the linen net on which the design appears and two layers of silk. Attached to the end of each brace by three rows of backstitches (**Fig. 3**) is a single piece of light leather, button-holed and encased in silk. All of the layers are held together by a 1/2" wide silk binding folded over and backstitched around the entire circumference of the brace.

The adjustment of the braces is provided by a buckle strap attached to the back (**Fig. 4**). Ms. Stille made the buckle strap from a single piece of light-weight leather, 9 1/2" long. She faced the rough side of the leather with a single piece of silk, whipped in place on the smooth side. Each of the brass buckles bares the imprint "Matier & Guibal." Slipped through the buckle loop is the button strap made of a leather strip 12 1/2" long and 1/2" wide encased in silk and bound by a silk tape.

These particular braces provide an excellent basis for many variations, embroidered or simply of cloth (**Fig. 5, 6, 7 & 8**). It is this attention to detail that will help keep the public returning to a living history site.

John Graf directed interpretation at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site when he contributed this piece as part of the regular feature, "Graf's Closet."

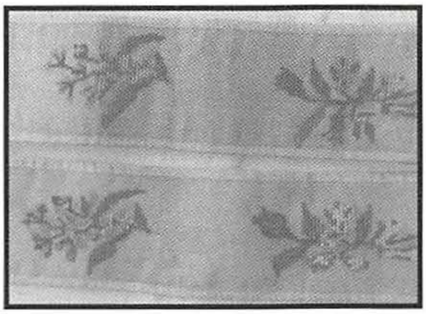


Fig. 5: Close-up of the needlework on the Stille braces.

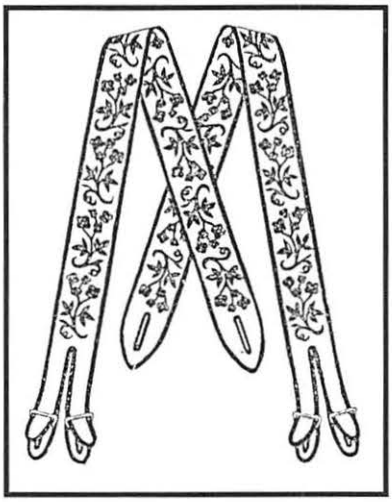


Fig. 6: Such needlework as that found on the Stille braces was popular during the 19th century prior to the American Civil War as exemplified by this illustration from Godey's Lady's Magazine, *c1853.*

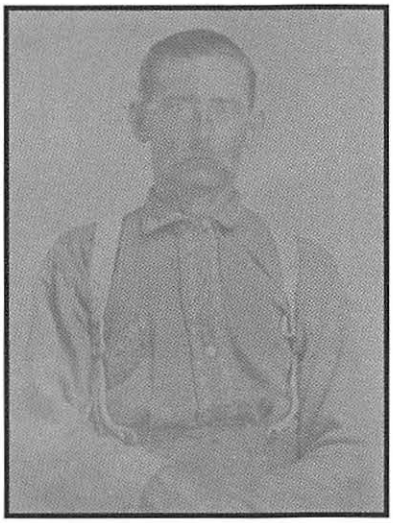
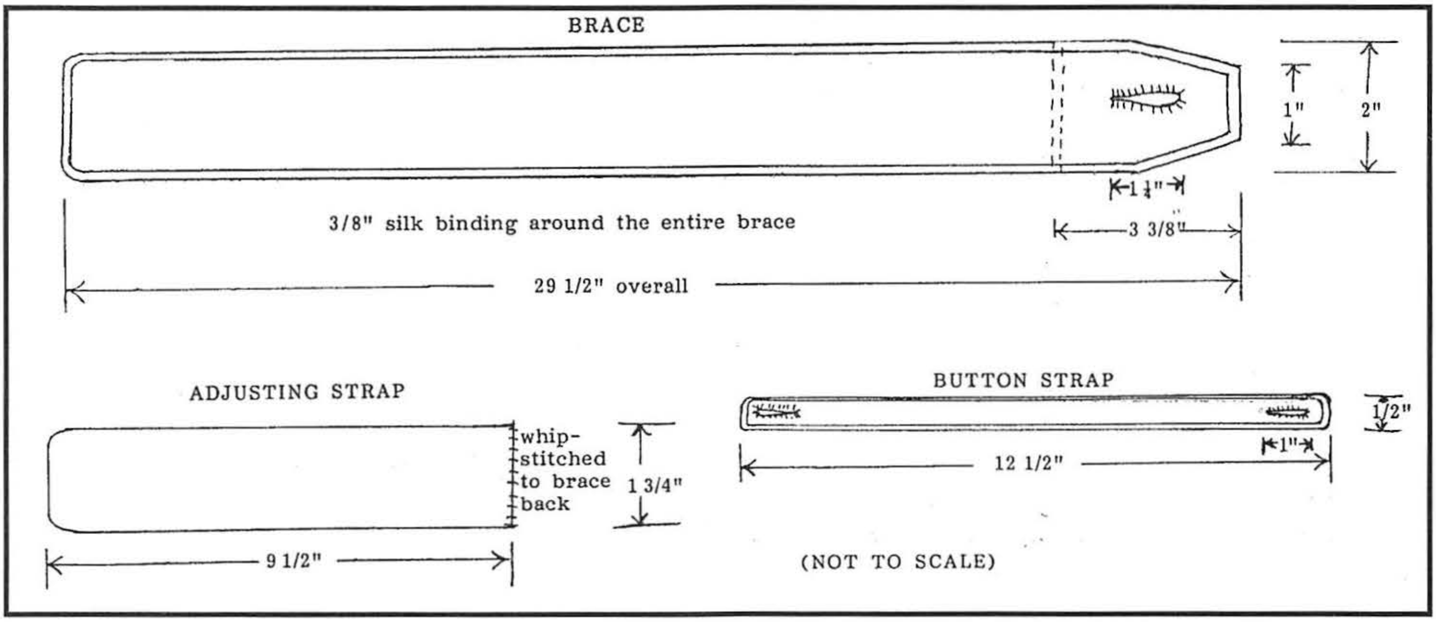


Fig. 7: Not only is this unidentified man wearing embroidered braces, his shirt also shares the decoration. (1/6 the plate tintype, ca. 1865, from the author's collection).

Fig. 8: This unidentified man posed for a tintype likeness with his child. He is wearing a pair of gingham braces and a pleated-front shirt. (1/9 the plate tintype, ca. 1858, from the author's collection).

Fig. 9: Measurements of the principle components of the Lillie Stille braces. (Not drawn to scale; drawings by the author).



This article originally appeared in Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine *9, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 15-17.*

The Working Man's Cap

by John F. Graf

Museums and living history sites provide no better opportunity for understanding the past than to place material culture, whether original or reproduction, back in its original setting. Placing a hammer, for example, in an exhibit case with many other hammers is one way to interpret that item's evolution, manufacture, or intended use. But to use a reproduction of that hammer in the manner for which it was intended in front of an audience will automatically place it in a context which the visitor can easily understand.

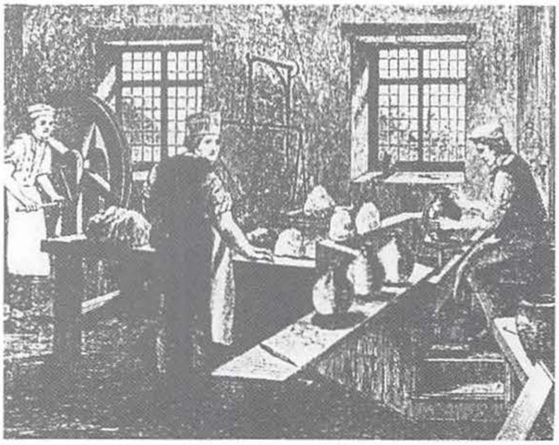


Fig. 1: Potters in the throwing rooms of the English Wedgewood potteries wearing the workman's cap. Source: Eliz. Meteyard, The Life of Josiah Wedgewood, *vol. 2 (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1866), p. 111.*

The setting, though, must be complete. A man wearing a broadcloth suit of clothes cannot effectively demonstrate the hammer's place in time or context. A cabinet maker in his shop with the proper surroundings and dressed correctly for his trade, will impart a great deal more information about the hammer when he uses it without ever having to utter a single word than if it hung in a case with a label discussing the hammer's place in the cabinet-making trade.

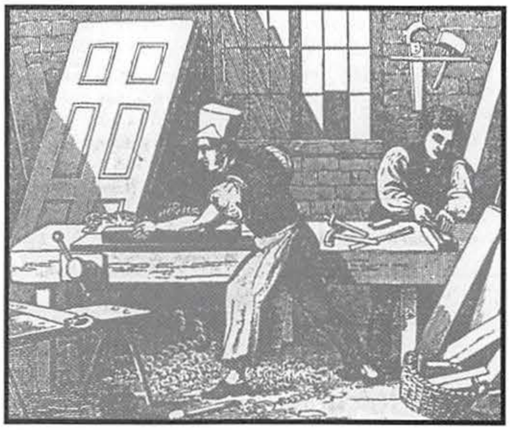


Fig. 2: The joiner planing down a board in the foreground is clearly wearing a workman's cap of the variety described. Source: Parley's Magazine, *pt. 15 (New York and Boston: Charles S. Francis & Joseph H. Francis, [1836]), p. 249.*

Many sites which represent mechanics and trades industries have suitably equipped workshops. Yet to a visitor, there is little that distinguishes an apprentice potter from the farmer or shopkeeper. Without an effective system of guilds during the nineteenth century, there were not the characteristic costumes that one might expect to identify tradesmen. Illustrations of the period, however, show that there were items of specialty clothing (**Fig. 1 & 2**). Aprons seem to usually have hung about a workman's neck. Generally his sleeves were rolled up. But most noticeable were the caps that the workmen wore. In a rare photographic glimpse of a young man filing a gear wheel (**Fig. 3**); we see all three of these indicators. He has rolled his sleeves, he wears an apron, and he dons a paper workman's cap.

The first two indicators are easily achieved (see "A 19th Century Man's Apron" in Midwest Open Air Museums *Magazine,* Vol. VIII, no. 1 for directions to make an appropriate apron). Due to the disposable nature of the cap, however, very few, if any, have survived, making reproduction difficult. In her 1838 *Workwoman's Guide,* the anonymous "Lady" sets forth directions for the construction of a workman's cap:

> Fold a sheet of common brown paper to make a workman's cap as follows:
>
> Let it be a square of ten nails [22 ½"], double it across like a half-handkerchief, and crease it well; open it and cross it again the other way, open it again, double down the middle one way, and crease it well; on spreading it out, it will be marked according to lines in figure [4]... .measure from the centre on the cross lines about one nail and three quarters [nearly 4"] (see A, B, C, D) next crease the paper from side to side through these points, thus:
>
> one line through AB, another through CD, and again CA and DB; . this will form a square in the

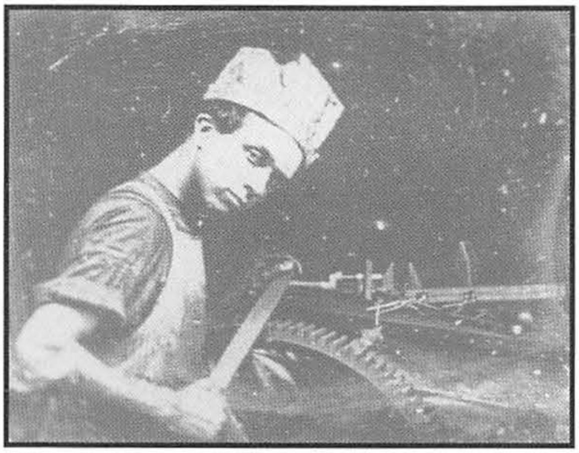


Fig. 3: An extraordinary 1/6 plate daguerreotype, c1850, of an apprentice posing with tools and wearing the clothes of his trade. (Courtesy of Matthew Isenburg, Hadlyme, Conn.).

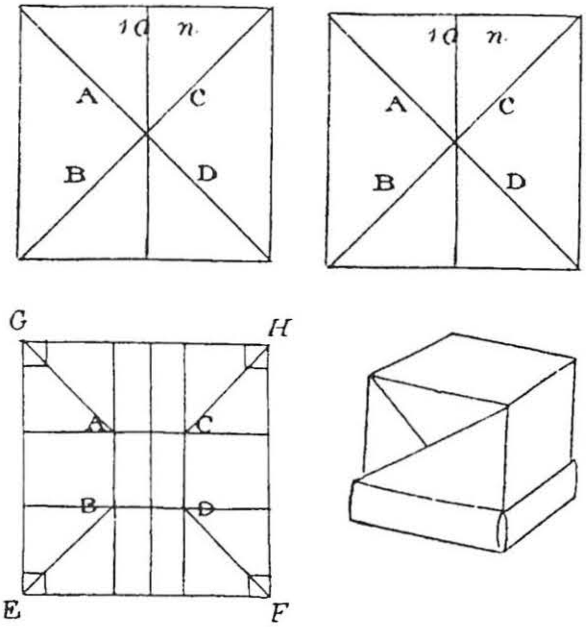


Fig. 4, 5 & 6: Source: A Lady, The Workwoman's Guide *(London: Eimpkin, Marshall, 1838), Pit. 19.*

> middle. Cut out a nail [2½"] square at every corner as in figure [5]… In folding it up, the square ABCD, in the centre forms the top of the cap, and the points EF, are doubled according to the cross-wise plait, and crossed in front towards each other, the other points, GH, are likewise crossed behind towards their opposite ends. The cap is then formed by merely turning up a piece all around to make it stand firmly. (Fig. [6]).

Because the caps were disposable, the workmen likely folded their caps daily. The interpretive value of a visitor seeing a tradesman fold one is nearly as strong as seeing him wear his cap while plying his trade. As often stated before in "Graf's Closet," it is the subtleties that make living history work; it is the gross generalities that cause it to fail.

John Graf worked at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site and was a contributing editor to the Magazine. *He shared pearls of wisdom regularly via "Graf's Closet."*

This article originally appeared in the Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine *10, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 22-23.*

CLOTHING COLLECTIONS ON-LINE: INDIANA UNIVERSITY/PURDUE UNIVERSITY INDIANAPOLIS (IUPUI)

Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) partnered with Conner Prairie to produce a website available through the IUPUI library. The on-line collection features a database with full-color photographs of 100 items of clothing worn by women, men, children and infants. Items range from aprons to corsets, beaver hats to baby bonnets, muffs to pelerines, shoes to head scarves and wool shirts to velvet vests. Eight silhouettes by Ericka Mason Osen, and a couple of fashion plates from period publications illustrate the distinctive features of nineteenth-century fashion.

http://www.lib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship/collections/CPclothing

The Farmer's Favorite: Building a Believable 19th-Century Hat

John F. Graf

Quality interpretation at a living history museum depends on strict attention to detail. If it is the museum's goal to create a believable depiction of another time, then that museum must exercise extreme caution in selecting its interpretive tools. When the living history site uses the "out of sight, out of mind" method of interpretation, it runs the risk of the public catching them at their game and destroying the illusion they have worked so hard to create.

There are several good forms of reproduction civilian headgear on the market. One of the most common forms, the wool felt hat, has not, however, been adequately reproduced. To wear one of the currently available hats in an unmodified form, the interpreter runs the risk of jeopardizing the illusion of his 19th-century impression.

Haentze Hatcrafters [20 N. Springfield Road, Clifton Heights, PA 19018; http://hatcrafters.com/] manufactures a couple of excellent forms with which to begin creating an accurate reproduction of the style of woolen hat popular from about 1835 to the end of the 19th century (Figs. 1 and 2). Haentze's hat style no. 60 called the Quaker and no. 285 called the Priest are shipped ready to wear with a vinyl sweatband and synthetic ribbon and binding.

For situations where an interpreter does not remove his hat or come too near to the public, these hats are fine without any modification. Most interpreters, however, interact closely with the public and remove their hats. With a few modifications, the simple act of an interpreter removing his hat will enhance rather than endanger his 19th-century impression.

After receiving your hat from Haentze, you must decide how you want to line it. Generally, 19th-century hats were lined. Two documented types of linings are shown in Figures 3 and 4. A member of the Bishop Hill Colony at Bishop Hill, Illinois wore a hat with a style 1 lining about 1860.[1] James W. Poague, a Confederate soldier, wore a hat with a style 2 lining which can be found at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia.[2]

Having chosen which lining to put into your hat, first use a seam ripper to remove the ribbon, the binding around the edge of the brim, and the sweatband. Refer to the pattern (Fig. 5) to replicate a lining. Cut your desired lining using silk, polished cotton, or printed cotton. Assemble following pattern instructions sewing the lining crown to the lining sides; insert the drawstring if relevant. Fit the lining into the crown of the hat and whip stitch it into place taking care not to go through the felt crown but rather just catching it.

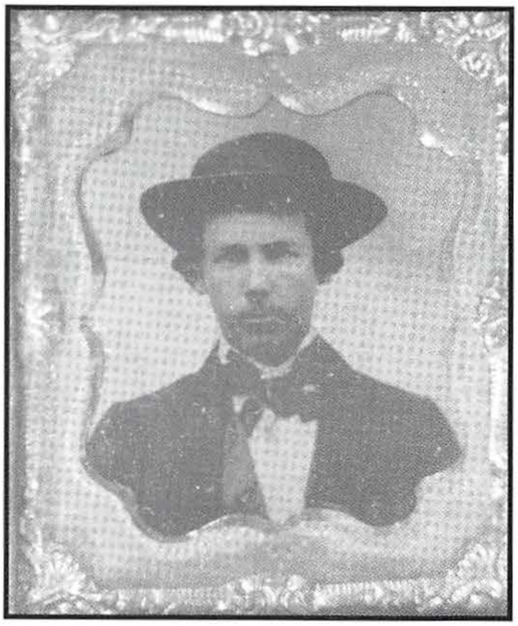


Fig. 2: 1/6th plate tintype of a man wearing a woolen hat similar to Haentze's Quaker. (From the author's collection)

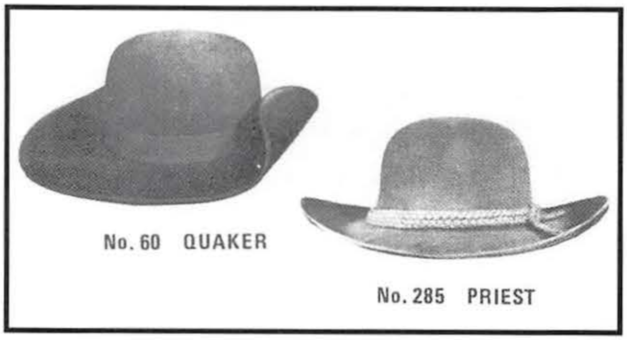


Fig. 1: No. 60, the Quaker and No. 285, the Priest. The basic forms are great but each lacks the details. Source: Haentze Hatcrafters.

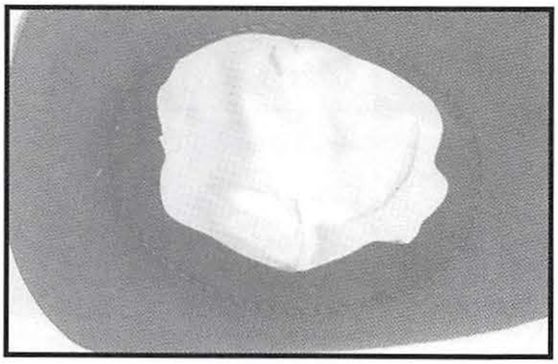


Fig. 3: Style 1 lining as found on Bishop Hill, Illinois hat, Bishop Hill Heritage Association.

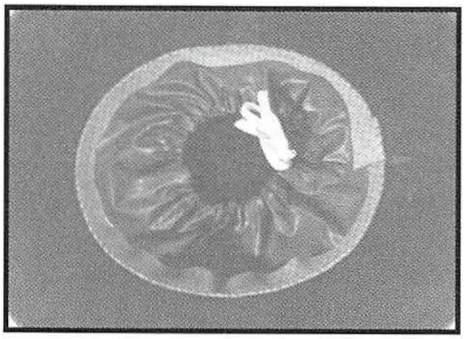


Fig. 4: Style 2 lining as found in the James W. Poague hat, Museum of the Confederacy.

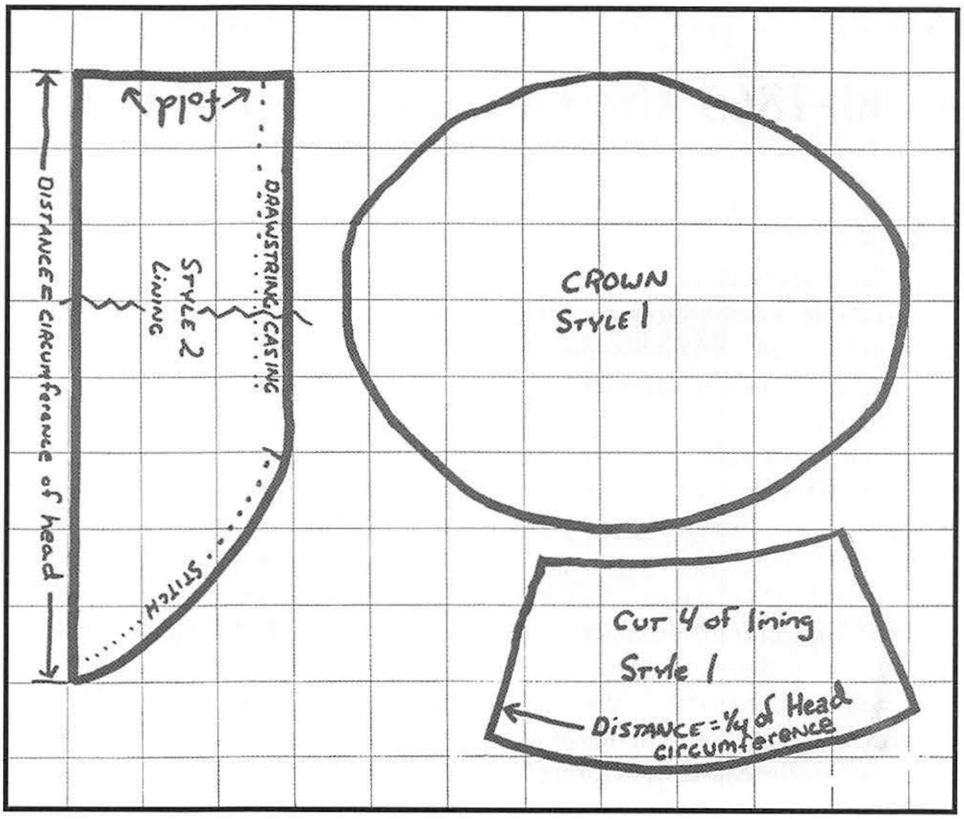


Fig. 5: Patterns for style 1 and style 2 hat linings. Grid is 1" at normal size

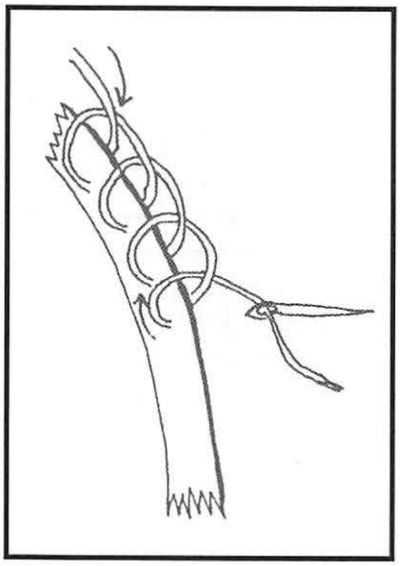


Fig. 7: Detail of the enlarged buttonhole stitch used to attach the brim binding.

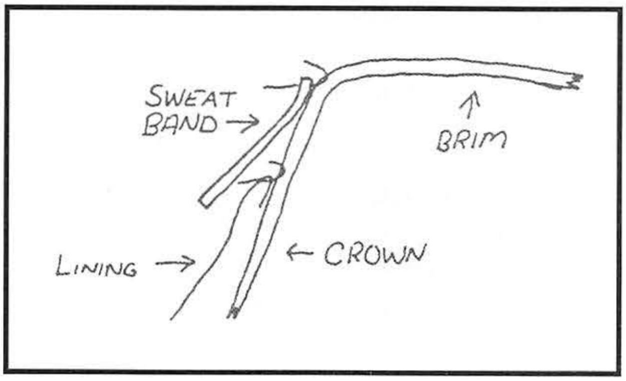


Fig. 6: Detail of sweatband and lining attachment. In both cases, the needle only catches the hat's felt rather than piercing it.

With the lining now in place, whip stitch a band of dyed, lightweight leather, 1 5/8" to 1 3/4" wide along the base of the crown and over the lining material (Fig. 6).

With lining completed, you can begin work on the hat exterior. Hand stitch a silk ribbon, generally of the same color as the hat, 1 1/4" to 1 1/2" wide, around the base of the crown folding it to form a bow on the side of the hat. Finally, a 1" silk binding is sewn to the brim using an enlarged buttonhole stitch for hats prior to 1855 (Fig. 7) or machine stitched if later (on the Poague hat, however, it is hand stitched).

Doing these simple modifications will enhance the quality and depth of your living history impression. Do not be disappointed though if a visitor never compliments you on the accuracy of your hat. Our successes are measured not by what the visitor recognizes but rather, by what he does not recognize.

Endnotes

1. As part of the clothing distributed to each male member of the Colony the issue book records a "Hatt" with a slash or the letter "y" for *ylle,* the Swedish-English word for woolen. See "Clothing Issues, 1859," Bishop Hill Heritage Association, Bishop Hill, Illinois.
2. Michael R. Thomas, *A Confederate Sketchbook* (Fredericksburg: Michael R. Thomas, 1980), p. 12.

John Graf worked at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site when he contributed this to "Graf's Closet" in 1989.

A Historic Overview of American Shirts: 1800-1865 The Development of Cut

by Thomas G. Shaw

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, American men wore shirts much the same in form as those worn by the first colonists in the fifteenth century. By the end of the Civil War the appearance of this most basic of garments had changed from a traditional pattern composed of rectangles and squares, to a considerably more tailored form recognizable in the late twentieth century.

The shirt of 1800 was cut on a traditional pattern. The term pattern does not refer to an actual paper pattern of the type mass-marketed today. In this case, pattern means the agreed upon cut of the garment. These patterns were simply measured on the yard goods. Virtually all shirts were cut from the same number of pieces in almost identical shapes. The major differences between dress and work shirts would have been in quality of material used, the delicacy of the sewing and the presence of a front frill (Fig. 1).

The Workwoman's Guide, published in Britain in 1838, gives an accurate view of a shirt cut near the end of the traditional shirt era. It lists nineteen "useful parts" on which the pattern layouts are based. These are: "1st Skirt or Body, 2nd and 3rd The Sleeves, 4th The Collar, 5th and 6th The Wristbands, 7th and 8th The Binders, 9th and 10th The Shoulder-Straps, 11th and 12th Two Sleeve-Gussets, 13th and 14th Two Neck-Gussets, 15th and 16th Two Hip, or Side-Gussets, 17th and 18th Two Wrist-Gussets, 19th One Bosom-Gusset."[1]

Of the pieces listed *in The Workwoman's Guide,* two are often absent from original shirts in the author's experience. The Wrist-Gussets and the Bosom-Gusset do not appear to have been used extensively. The Wrist-Gusset was a small square of fabric, folded into a triangle, intended to be sewn into the corner of the wrist vent to prevent it from tearing at its junction with the sleeve-seam. The Bosom-Gusset was a strip of facing material sewn inside the front slit. Even without the Wrist-Gusset original shirts did not appear to tear easily at that place. Likewise, most early shirts have the front slit finished by simply hemming the cut edge and reinforcing the bottom with stitching.[2]

The Workwoman's Guide recommends that shifts and many items of baby-linen be cut in multiples. In the illustrations of layouts, the assumption is that six will be cut. This economy of materials was one of the chief virtues of the traditional shirt. With no curves, any woman could lay out the garments with virtually no waste. Indeed, while the estimated required yardage for a shirt cut from material 30 inches wide was 3 yards, this is usually not quite enough. Cutting in multiples allowed the same types of pieces to be lined up and cut together after the bodies were laid out, thus saving cloth.[3]

The second virtue of the traditional shirt from a production standpoint was that it required virtually no fitting. With the pieces cut to proportion, the only two places of fit were the neck and the wristbands. The fitting method used here was to gauge the excess material into the allotted space. The neck-gussets gave the neck some shape, and the neckline was then gauged into the finished collar that was cut to the neck size. The same procedure was used to attach the wristbands.

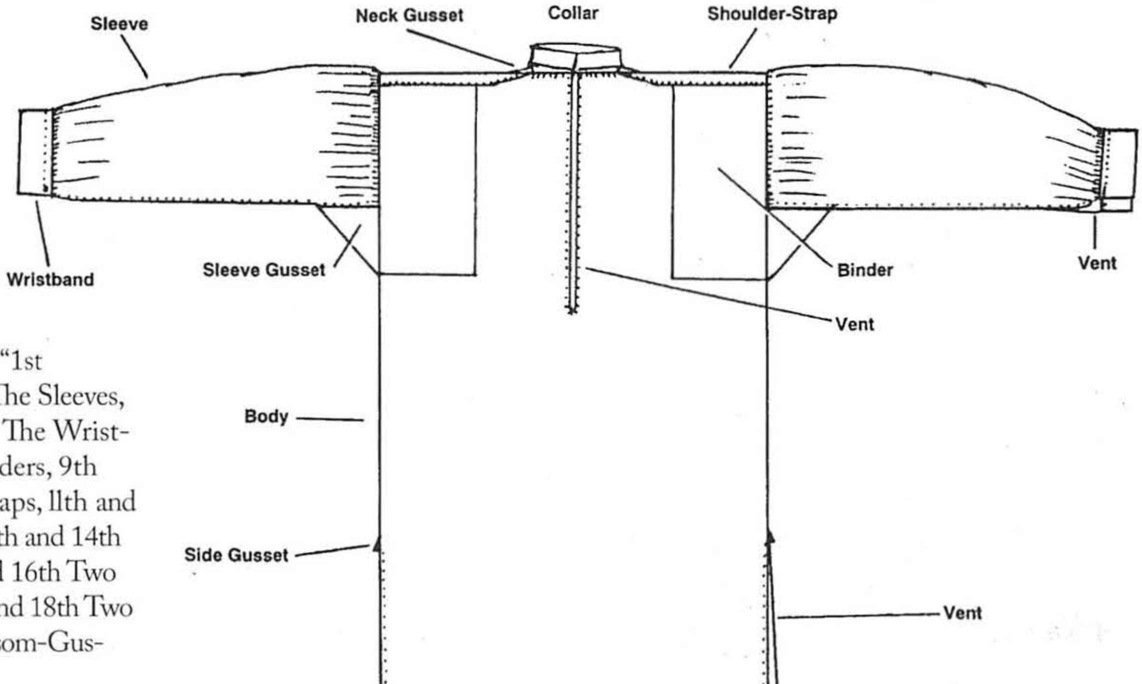


Fig. 1: Components of the Tradition-Cut Shirt

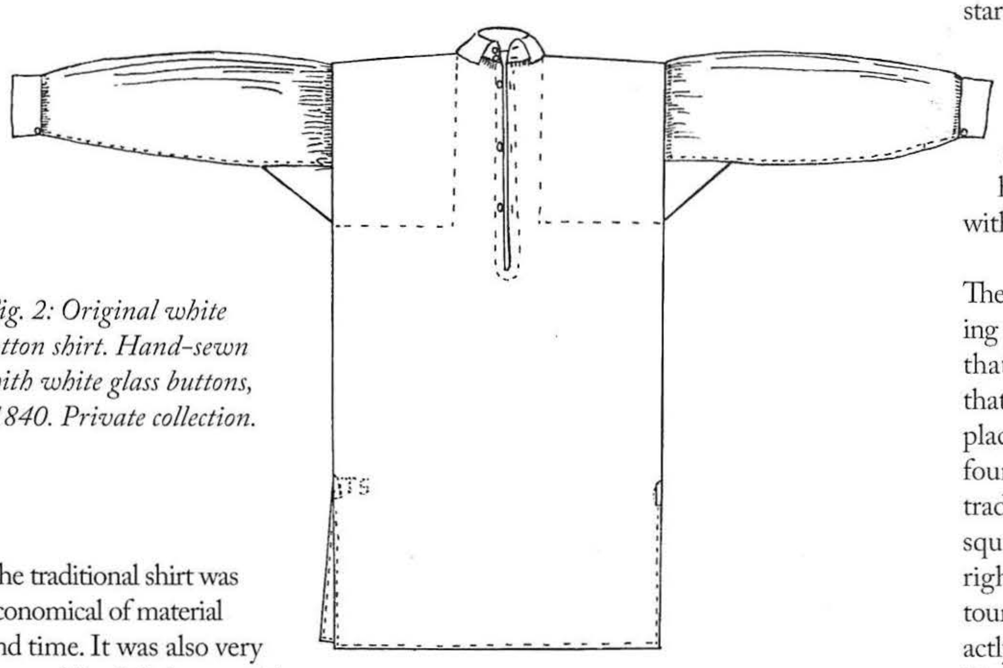


Fig. 2: Original white cotton shirt. Hand-sewn with white glass buttons, c1840. Private collection.

The traditional shirt was economical of material and time. It was also very roomy. The full sleeves with their gussets provided ample freedom of movement. The near knee length of the body provided protection from rough breeches and trousers since it was the only form of underwear worn by most men. As such, its primary function was to protect the outer clothing from being soiled by the body (**Fig. 2**).

These virtues also made the traditional shirt somewhat uncomfortable to wear. Most of the discomfort was the result of the square angle across the shoulders and the T-shaped neckline with its gussets. The gussets caused the actual neckline to be above the square to the shoulders. Since the human figure is not shaped like a box, the square shoulders did not lay along the natural slope of the shoulder. The end result was that the shirt was held in place by the buttoned collar, causing the shirt body to roll forward along the shoulders. This in turn caused pull on the neck.

The first major change in the shirt cut came sometime in the 1840s. While the traditional cut was still the principal form, dress shirts began to utilize a more sophisticated neckline device. For the sake of clarity we will refer to this as the *contoured neckline.* Basically, the change was made to the traditional cut shirt in two ways. First, the body was cut in two parts with a seam along the top of the shoulders. This part of the body was cut with a slight downward angle to more closely follow the natural angle of the shoulders. The second change was to cut a shaped neckline. This was a slight oval cut into the front and back parts of the body. The front piece was cut out about an inch below the horizontal at center front. The back piece was cut down about a half-inch at center back. This is essentially how modern shirt necklines are cut. The result is a collar which lays around the base of the neck. This new form allowed the shirt to be more fully supported by the shoulders, reduced pull on the neck without sacrificing strength and resulted visually in a lower collar.

Garments with these features worked into an otherwise traditional shirt became very common by the mid-1850s. They were somewhat less material efficient but more comfortable as they lay along the shoulders rather than being virtually suspended from the neckband. Perhaps because of this they continued a trend started in the 1840s of more fully lining the upper part of the body. As such, the contoured neckline shirt is rarely encountered with shoulder straps or narrow binders. They are, however, almost universally equipped with a front plaquet closure (Fig. 3).

The final series of changes occurred during the Civil War and resulted in a shirt that exhibited many characteristics that continue in use. These changes took place in several areas. The most profound alteration was in the sleeves. The traditional rectangular sleeve joined the square body of the shirt at a simple right angle. The new shirt had a contoured armscye cut into the body in exactly the same manner as modern shirts. The sleeve was cut with a correspondingly curved head. Though it was still cut in one piece it now tapered to the cuff. Gathers or plaits were still used to affect the sleeve-cuff join without sacrificing room in the elbow. A small gathered panel at the top of the sleeve head is occasionally seen on this type of shirt.

The neckline was also under revision. Increasingly in the 1860s use was made of a yoke across the shoulder. The shirt body was cut in two pieces with the rear section shorter at the top. A yoke composed of outer and lining pieces was then added, joining the front and back with a seam at the back across the shoulder blades and another along the top of the shoulder. It is not clear why these features came into use as it appears to serve the same function as cutting the body sections separately with a slanted shoulder seam as described previously. The yoke method was certainly stronger. Whatever the reason it appeared as early as 1848 when Oliver Winchester described it as a "French yoke" in his patent application for a still more sophisticated shirt pattern.[4] The yoke, however, appears to have obviated the need for

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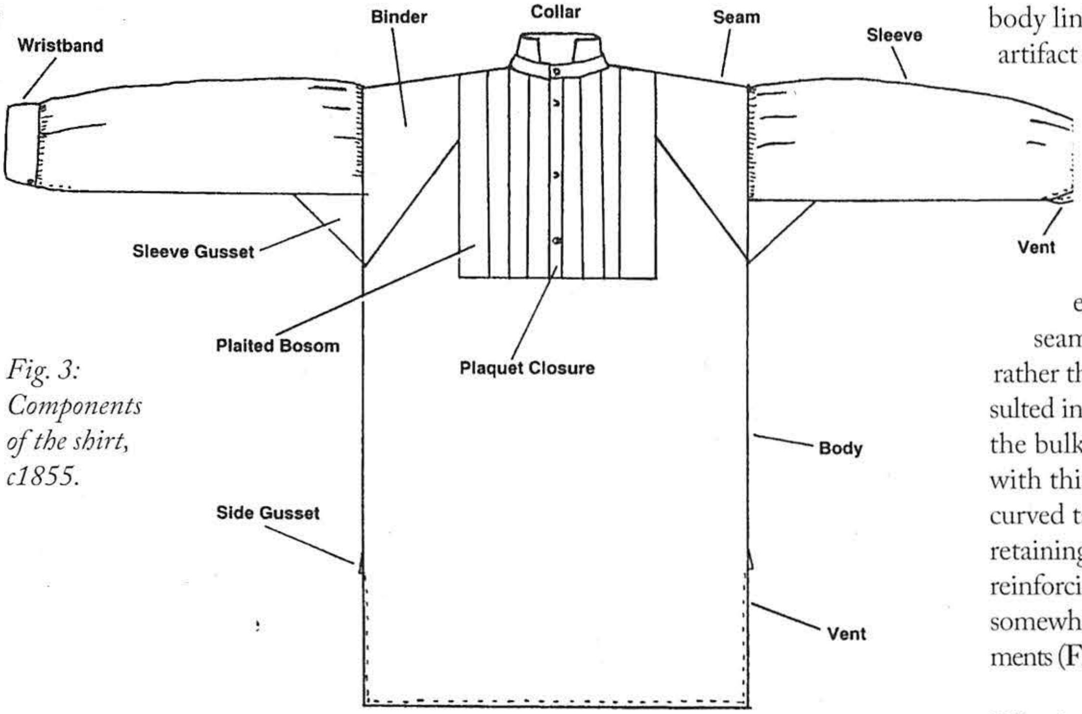

Fig. 3: Components of the shirt, c1855.

body linings as these are not seen on artifact shirts. Binders did reappear to reinforce the armscye. Like the armscye these were cut with a curve and tended to be rather narrow.

The final pattern change affected the body. Increasingly the side seams were cut with a concave curve rather than with a straight seam. This resulted in a narrower body and reduced the bulk of the shirt. Original shirts with this feature also exhibit convex curved tails with rounded corners while retaining the rather deep side vents with reinforcing gussets. These shirts are also somewhat shorter than traditional garments (**Fig. 4**).

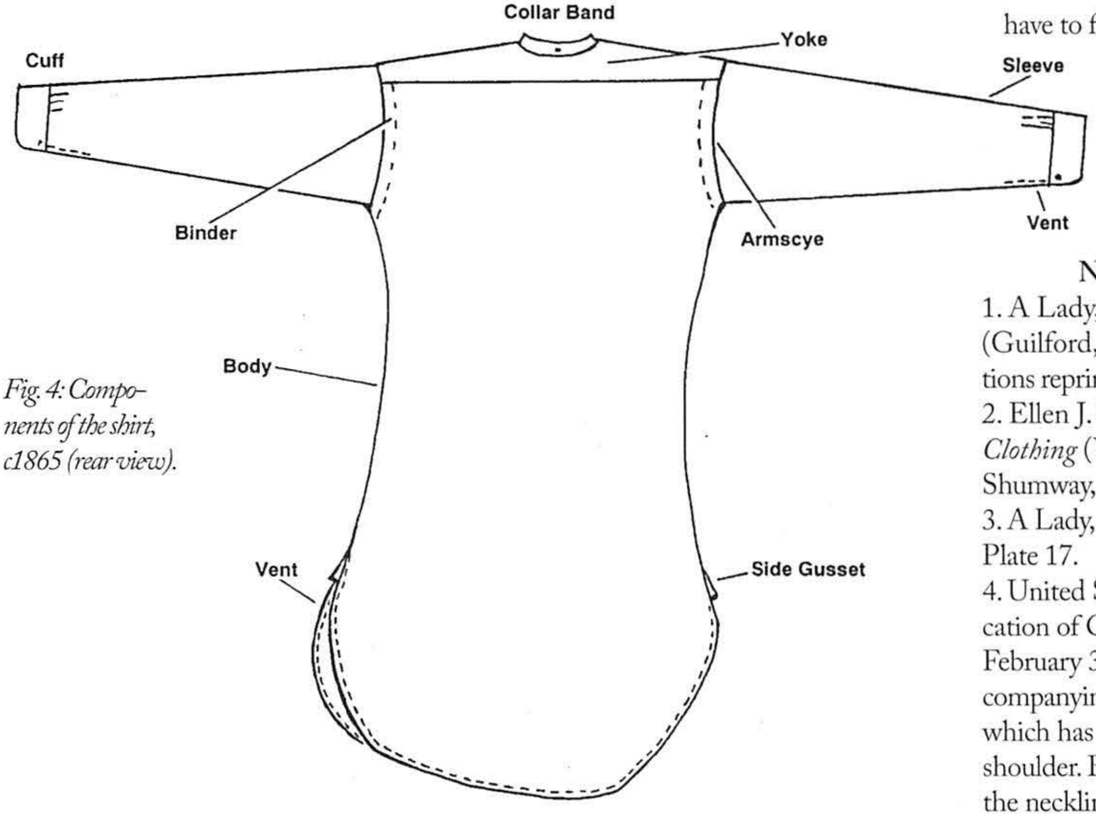

Fig. 4: Components of the shirt, c1865 (rear view).

Why these changes? The general trend in tailoring at the time was toward more sophisticated patterns resulting in a more precise cut. In order to realize the full effect of these improvements, shirts would have to fit the body closer. It could also be that more men were wearing drawers. With form-fitting trousers, a shorter shirttail would have improved overall appearance.

Notes

1. A Lady, *The Workwoman's Guide* (Guilford, Connecticut: Opus Publications reprint, 1986), p. 138.
2. Ellen J. Gehert, *Rural Pennsylvania Clothing* (York, Pennsylvania: George Shumway, 1976), pp. 120, 258.
3. A Lady, *The Workwoman's Guide,* p.136; Plate 17.
4. United States Patent Office, application of O.F. Winchester, No. 5421; February 3, 1848. The illustration accompanying this application shows a yoke which has no apparent seam along the shoulder. Both seams lay on the body and the neckline is cut into both pieces.

Thomas Shaw was Assistant Site Manager at the Minnesota Historical Society's Historic Fort Snelling when he wrote this article.

Men's Trouser Styles in the Midwest, 1820-1850

by William K. Combs

The first half of the 19th century was an important time in the development of men's trouser styles. The knee breeches of the 18th century had carried on into the early 19th, but by 1820 were largely replaced by fall front pantaloons and trousers. This closure system was, in turn, to give way to the newer fly front style a short time later. The style used depended largely on the person's social and economic standing and, to some extent, on geographic location. The changes in styles which marked the period would have come to the mid-west soon after appearing in the more fashionable eastern cities due to the rise at the time of improved transportation and communications systems. In this brief discussion we will look at each type of trouser, its construction and fabric content.

By the 1820s, cloth knee breeches were retained only by the elderly or sartorial conservatives. A portrait of Charles Carrol at 93 painted in 1830, shows him still clinging to the knee breeches fashionable in his youth.[1] The genre paintings of the 1830s and 1840s clearly show the contrast of aged, knee breeches-wearing gentlemen to young men clad in trousers.[2] Knee breeches of leather also continued to be used as work clothing in some rural and frontier areas. Because of their sturdy construction and the hard wearing nature of leather, they would generally give many years of service. An original pair in the collection of the Chester County Historical Society in Pennsylvania shows their construction to be basically the same as cloth breeches.[3] In 1832, during the Black Hawk War, Abraham Lincoln remembered seeing a fellow Illinois militiaman wearing buckskin breeches.[4]

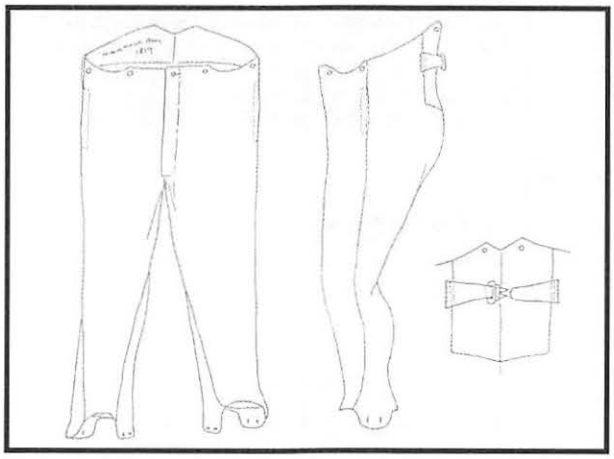

Fig 1: A sketch of Joseph Prime's wedding pantaloons. A leather strap would have been worn under the foot. (Illustration by the author.)

Far more common, however, were pantaloons and trousers. Pantaloons were cut so that the shape of the legs conformed to that of the person wearing them. Generally, they were strapped under the foot. A hybrid version, known as pantaloon trousers, fit tightly from thigh to calf, then flaired loosely over the ankle.[5] Trousers were made with loosely fitting legs.[6]

Pantaloons were generally used as dresswear as their tight fit made them an impractical garment in which to work. Joseph Prime of Missouri wore pantaloons at his wedding in 1819 (Fig. 1). These were made of black wool broadcloth with the waist, cuffs and foot straps lined with cotton muslin. The pantaloons have a five button fly front, which is very uncommon at such an early date, and a unique square-gusseted back which was pulled tight for a better fit by an attached belt and buckle. Two pockets were provided, with the openings being slits on the side seams. The buttons are a mix of brass and brown dyed bone.[7]

Other Midwesterners also seem to have taken to the fashion of wearing pantaloons. A traveler wrote in 1834 that the men of Galena, Illinois were dressed in pantaloons of Kentucky Jean.[8] Kentucky Jean, also known as Jean or Janes, was a wool and cotton twill cloth. Writing in 1843, William Oliver had this to say about its production in Illinois:

> The wool is mostly spun and manufactured by the females, and spinning wheels and a loom are very general items in a farmer's establishment. The principle manufacture is a sort of light cloth called janes, of which the warp is formed of cotton. Some of the women are very expert weavers and employ their spare time in making cloth, which they sell or exchange for necessities at the store.[9]

The pantaloon fashion continued well on into the 1840s. A reporter for a Boston newspaper on a trip to Illinois in 1847 noted seeing a group of dancers at a country tavern. One of them wore "blue pantaloons strapped down so tight that he could scarcely move about."[10] He later noted, on meeting a for-

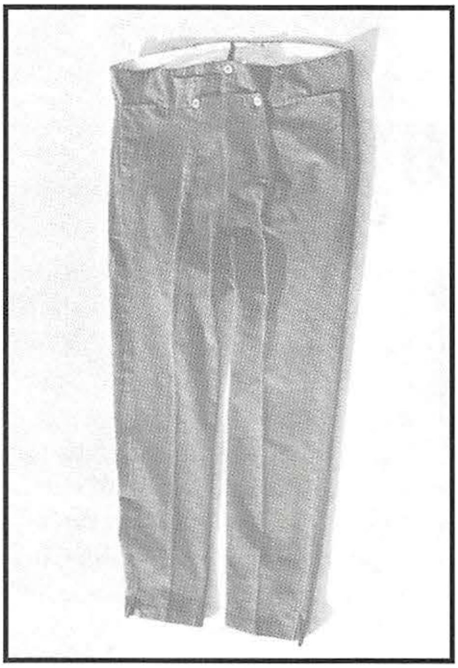

Fig. 2: An over-all view of rust brown 1835 Illinois trousers. (Photograph by the author.)

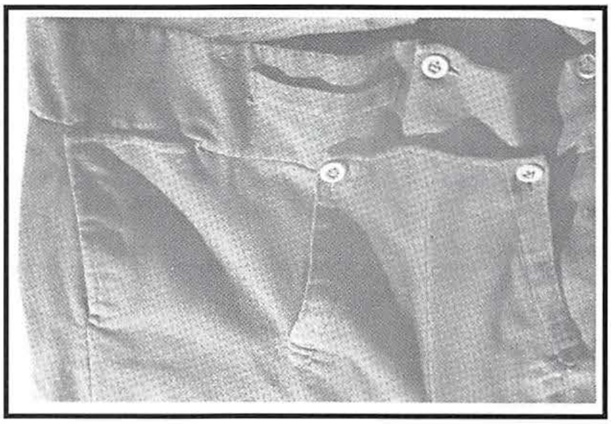

Fig 3: Detail of the front of the rust brown 1835 Illinois trousers. Note the construction of the fall, pocket flap and watch pocket. (Photograph by the author.)

mer officer of the Illinois volunteer troops in the Mexican War that, "His pantaloons were of the common cheap blue cotton and were worn through in holes about where his legs probably touched the saddle in riding."[11]

Although pantaloons were popular for daily wear with the fashion-minded or the upper classes, most men wore them for best dress. Trousers were by far the most common work wear. The many genre paintings of Midwest artists such as Missouri's George Caleb Bingham and Ohio's James H. Beard and the portraits of Illinois' Sheldon Peck clearly show the predominance of trousers.

Several examples of trousers of the period under consideration have come to light in the Midwest. Two of the earliest are from Springfield, Illinois (Fig. 2&3). Both are similar in construction and appear to have been made for the same man. They are believed to date from around 1835. Both pair are made of good quality wool broad cloth, one being rust brown and the other dark blue in color. Each has a small fall front closure and is lined with white cotton on the fall and waistband. Pockets are of the "dog ear" style and a small watch pocket is located on the right side of the waistband. All the buttons are made of bone with those on the brown pair being dyed a dark brown. The cuff of the rust brown trousers has a small slit, approximately two inches long on the outside seam. The blue pair appears to have also had this slit at one time, but were altered at a later date.[12]

Another pair of trousers from about the same date as the previous two pair comes from Missouri (Fig. 4). It is of heavy white linen with a small, two button, fall front. It has no gusset in the back and the narrow waistband is closed with one button. All buttons are of bone.[13]

The cuffs are simply rolled under and hemmed with no slit on the sides. Pockets are provided at the side seams and are also covered with the "dog ear" style flap. As with most 19th century trousers, it has four buttons for use with suspenders (two front and two back).[14]

Although fall front trousers, like those mentioned above, were worn all through the 1830s and 1840s, they were being generally replaced by the fly front. Beginning to appear in the early 1820s,[15] the fly front trousers were well on their way to being the most common style by the 1830s. This is well illustrated in the East by the character of the hunter in William Sidney Mount's painting "The Sportsman's Last Visit" (1836)[16] and the middle boy in Thomas LeClear's "Boys Fishing" (1846).[17] In the Midwest, this same change can be found in the paintings and sketches of George Bingham, starting around 1845.[18]

Three pairs of Midwestern fly-front trousers from the period under consideration have been examined. As with the above mentioned fall-front trousers, all are completely hand sewn.

The first two pair are of blue, wool and cotton mixed, jean material. Both appear to date from about 1845 and are very similar in construction. One pair comes from Kentucky or Tennessee[19] with the other being from Missouri.[20] Both are made straight legged with pockets located in the side seams. Buttons on the Kentucky pair are of bone while the Missouri pair has buttons of horn. The Missouri pair

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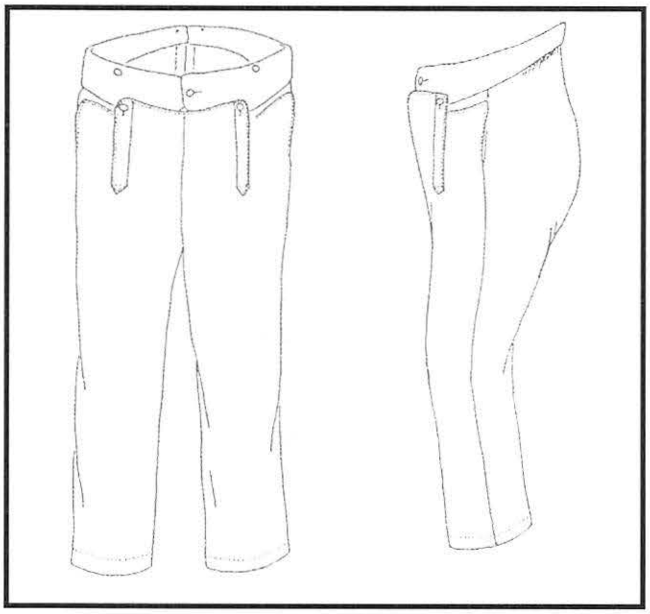
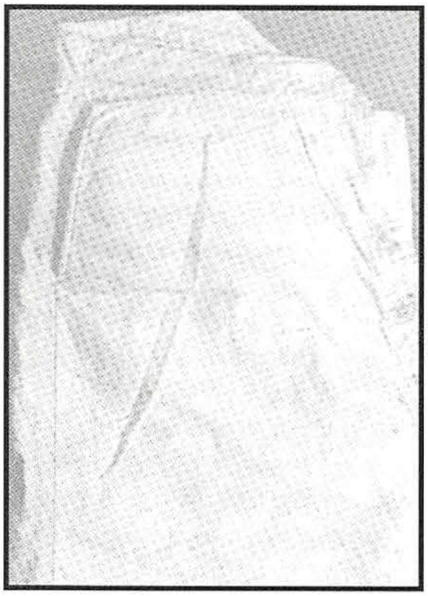


Fig. 4. Small fall-front trousers from Missouri. Of special note are the "dog ear" style pocket flaps. (Illustration by the author.)



Photograph by the author

Fig. 5 Detail of the half pair of white cotton, Illinois trousers. Again, the "dog ear" pocket flap is used. Also visible is the watch pocket on the waistband.

is also fully lined in white cotton. Jean trousers seem to have been extremely popular and widely worn by Midwestern men. An 1841 description of an Illinois hunter notes, "...his capacious trousers, of homemade janes, have their nether extremities stuffed into the tops of his long-legged boots."[21] Abraham Lincoln, in 1831, was described as wearing blue jean trousers which he kept rolled up at the cuff.[22] His father, Thomas Lincoln, was also known to wear walnut-dyed jeans trousers while living in Coles County, Illinois, during the 1840s.[23]

The third example, from Illinois, is in fact half a pair, as only the right side remains (Fig.5). It is of fine white cotton with linings and pockets of coarser white cotton. Pockets are of the "dog ear" flap style. A watch pocket is located on the right side with the opening at the very top of the waistband. A short adjusting belt tab is attached to the back. No buttons remain, but rust stains where they had been indicate that they were probably stamped iron. Rust stains on the belt tab would also suggest that the buckle used was iron. The cuffs are slightly belled to flare over the foot and have an inch hem. An old note pinned to these trousers reads, "I think was Effie's Pa's pants. Notice they are hand sewed."[24]

The manufacture of all types of trousers was handled in three ways: homemade, tailor-made and ready-made. In the early part of the century, almost all work clothing was produced at home. Daniel Brush states that as a boy of 12 in Southern Illinois during the 1820s, his first earnings of $3.00 in silver were used for clothing. He recalled, "mother suggested that new clothes would come in handy for the winter and to wear for school, so it was decided to invest in that line, and when a neighbor made a trip to St. Louis for supplies, the money was sent by him to purchase cloth for the suit. He did so and brought back good strong grey cassinet.[25] Out of which mother made me the garments that served me well and were the pride of my heart."[26]

Tailors also served the Midwest. A "Bill of Prices" of the three master tailors of Princeton, Kentucky in 1843, list the following styles and prices of trousers:[27]

A pair of cloth, cassmire
$2.00 cash $2.50 credit
or cassinett pants
if with straps
$2.50 cash $3.00 credit
A pair of jean or plain pants
$1.50 cash $2.00 credit
If with straps
$2.00 cash $2.50 credit
A pair of plain gaiter pants
$2.50 cash $3.00 credit
With buttons up the leg
$3.00 cash $3.50 credit

If a customer was skilled in sewing but not in measuring and cutting, these same tailors would cut out their trousers for them. The cost for this service was 37 ½ cents.

It is difficult to determine the volume of business tailors had in the Midwest, but sales of ready-made goods are traceable through surviving store records. A study of Illinois stores reveals that in Petersburg in 1837, only five pair of trousers were sold. At Berwick in 1839, the number sold was only six pair.[29] A search through the 1850s account book of a store from Ohio[30] and one of the same date from Kentucky[31] reveal similar low sales in trousers. On the other hand, sales of most other types of ready-made men's clothing, including hats, coats, vests, shirts, shoes and boots, gloves, suspenders, etc. were relatively high.

Although by no means a complete survey of the subject, the figures above would tend to indicate that home or tailor-made trousers were by far the most commonly produced and worn. The large volume of sales of the materials used to make trousers at the above mentioned stores would also support this assumption.

For a subject as broad as early 19th century trouser styles, this brief study can only provide a basic overview. However, it is hoped that it will provide a foundation on which to build a better understanding of these garments and of Midwestern styles and culture.

Footnotes

1. Peterson, *Americans at Home*, 1071, N.P.P., Plate no. 38.
2. Ibid., Plate 51, "The Pedlar Displaying His Wares," 1836, and Plate 75, "Soldier's Experience," 1844, are two good examples of this style, of art.
3. Gehret, *Rural Pennsylvania Clothing*, pp. 272-274.
4. Thomas, *Lincoln's New Salem*, p. 56.
5. Gehert, Rural Pennsylvania Clothing, p. 284.
6. Ibid., p. 287.
7. Original pantaloons in the collection of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri.
8. Angle, Prairie State, p. 149.
9. Oliver, *Eight Months in Illinois*, p. 53.
10. Pratt, *Illinois As Lincoln Knew* It, p. 26.
11. Ibid., p. 43.
12. Originals in the collection of the Old State Capitol, Springfield, Ill.
13. Missouri Historical Society collection.
14. In the time period under consideration, trousers were held up by suspenders. Waist belts did not appear, in general, until after the Civil War. The first pair noted in a photograph is dated 1869. Other features not found on trousers of this period are back hip pockets, and of course, zipper flys.
15). Gehert, *Rural Pennsylvania Clothing*, p. 287.
16. Peterson, *Americans at Home*, N.P.P., Plate 47.
17. The Magazine Antiques, August 1985, No. 128, p. 171.
18. *Bingham's Missouri*; this is an excellent source book for Bingham's more detailed work.
19. Formerly in the collection of Dale Gable, Nashville.
20. In the collection of the Arrow Rock State Historic Site, Arrow Rock, MO.
21. Oliver, Eight Months in Illinois, p. 81.
22. Thomas, *Lincoln's New Salem*, p. 59.
23. Personal remembrances of George Balch, on file at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site.
24. Collection of Joseph S. Covais, New Columbia, Charleston, Illinois.
25. Cassinet is a finer form of wool and cotton mixed jean.
26. Brush, *Growing Up With Southern Illinois, 1820 to 1861*, p. 41.
27. Collection of Joseph S. Covais, Charleston, Illinois.
28. These man be similar to the overalls used by the Army in the Revolution through the war of 1812.
29. Alien, et. al., Interpreting 1830's Storekeeping in New Salem, Illinois, pp. 118-122.
30, Collection of Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site, Lerna, Illinois.
31. Collection of Joyce Feder Combs, Lerna, Illinois.

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Bill Combs *was Site Interpretive Specialist at* Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site *in Illinois when he wrote this article.*

CLOTHING COLLECTIONS ON-LINE: THE ELIZABETH SAGE HISTORIC COSTUME COLLECTION

The Elizabeth Sage Historic Costume Collection at Indiana University includes more than 17,000 items collected by the first professor of clothing and textiles at Indiana University, Elizabeth Sage, between 1913 and 1937. She collected mostly early-twentieth-century items that she used in her teaching. The website features only sixteen artifacts from the vast collection but it also provides information on exhibits, including some pdf files.

http://www.indiana.edu/~sagecoll/#

Circa 1870-1901 Apron Overalls

by Saundra Ros Altman

Military Contribution by Stephen Osman
Edited by Susan Lyons Hughes

In the nineteenth century, overalls could have been a pair of trousers called overall pants, an apron with or without sleeves, a shirt and trousers sewn together at the waist, or a pair of trousers with a chest piece attached at the waist and straps holding the chest piece in place. Only the latter, known as apron front or bib overalls, is presented in this paper.

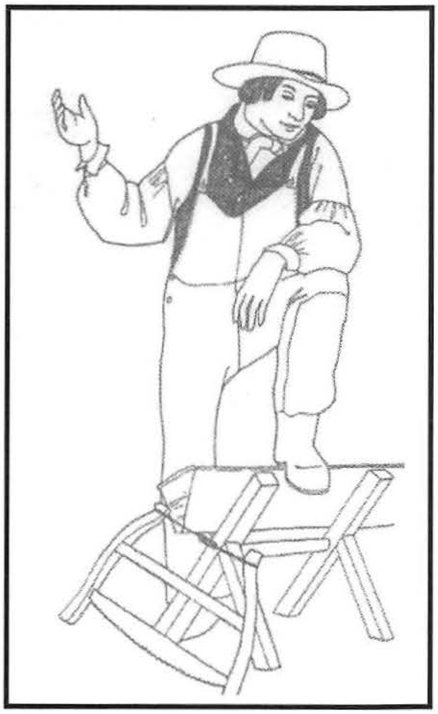

Fig. 1: Detail of "In the Woodshed," 1838 by James Clonney. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

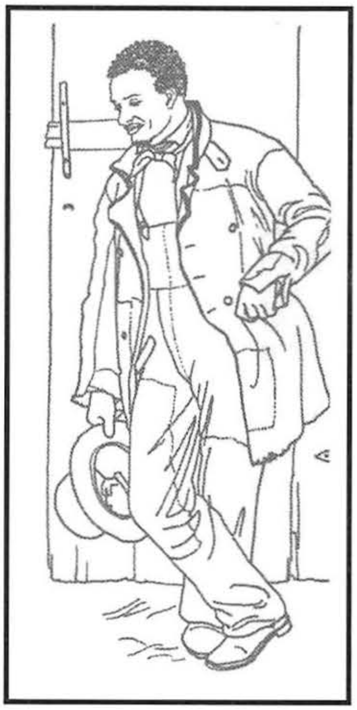

Fig. 2: Detail of "The Power of Music," 1847 by William Sidney Mount. Cleveland Ohio Musuem of Art.

Early Nineteenth Century Paintings

Paintings in the second quarter of the nineteenth century show overalls as trousers with a separate piece sewn to the front waist to cover the chest. These two examples illustrate the separate chest piece sewn to trousers without a waistband.
In 1838 James Clonney painted *In the Woodshed.* It is one of the few early paintings of overalls that clearly shows trousers with a chest piece sewn to the waist. The piece starts at the side opening. The straps are fastened to the chest piece with buttons **(Fig. 1)**.

Nine years later William Sydney Mount painted *The Power of Music* in which a man wears overalls similar to those in the Clonney painting. In addition, the trousers have a fly closure and at least one diagonal welt pocket. The patches on both legs are similar to the patch on the left leg of the man in the woodshed. The patches might give a clue to the occupation of the wearer **(Fig. 2)**.

Mid-Nineteenth Century Daguerreotypes

The detail of a quarter plate daguerreotype attributed to Joseph Blaney Starkweather shows a black miner at the Auburn Ravin in 1852 (in the collection of the California State Library). His overalls appear to be too big. To accommodate extra girth, the overalls are folded over in the front. To hold the chest piece up, the braces are fastened to the opposite instead of the nearest corner. The suspenders are extended with tapes or possibly woven India rubber. We cannot tell if there is a waist seam. A welt pocket shows on the right side.
In the southern states, there are references to slaves wearing pants with an apron. Helen Bradley Foster, in her book, *New Raiments of Self: African American Clothing of the Antebellum South,* quotes former slaves interviewed during the 1936 to 1938 Federal Writers' Project:

Anna Peek: *The men wore pants known as apron pants. The cloth was known as jeans ...* (S1.4.2:478[GA]).

Sabe Rutledge (b. 1861): *First time I big enough to realect (recollect) him [grandfather] he have on no pants but something built kinder like overalls and have a apron. Apron button up here where my overall buckle and can be let down. All be dye with indigo* (3. 4:65 [SC]).

A daguerreotype of a wall-paperer, undated, but owned by Matthew R. Isenburg and featured in *Daguerreian Annual* (1996), shows that the chest piece of the paperer's overalls was made of three pieces.

We expect overalls to cover the trousers worn under them, but details from some daguerreotypes show trousers peaking through. Examples include two workers on a ship in dry dock at Boston Navy Yard, circa

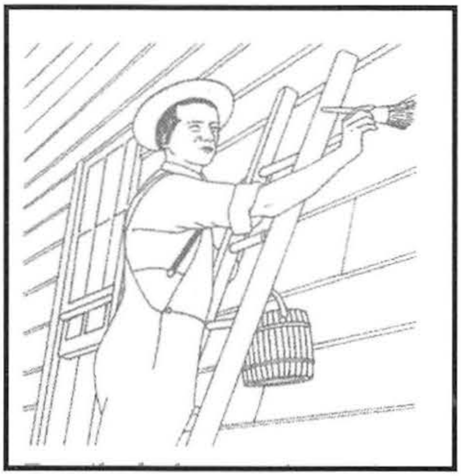

Fig. 3: Detail of a housepainter from a 1/6th plate daguerreotype circa 1850. In the collection of Greg French.

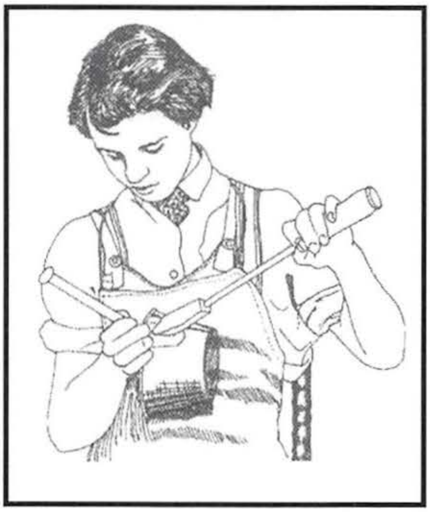

Fig. 4: Detail of "The Apprentice Tinsmith," a 1/6th plate daguerreotype circa 1850. With the permission of Dennis A. Waters.

1852, captured in a daguerreotype taken by Southworth & Hawes (George Eastman House), and a housepainter at work showing his trousers above his overalls (**Fig. 3**).

Some workers wore even more layers, as a daguerreotype of an apprentice tinsmith shows. He appears to be wearing three layers: trousers, overalls over his trousers, and an apron over all (**Fig. 4**).

Manufacturing

Bishop Hill Colony, in Bishop Hill, Illinois, was a communal society from 1846 to 1861. The Colony provided for the needs of its members. "As for the every day clothing ought to be taken into consideration which can be found proper for Every person employed in different kind of trades..." In 1859 "ofverhals" were "issued to a man by the name of Hallsing" and five others. The colonists also manufactured "overhauls" to sell to non-colonists.

In 1855, under document number B-NC010 — Goods sold to non-colonists, 15 overhauls are listed:

1 pr in January	60¢
1 pr in July	55¢
1 pr in Sept.	50¢
1 pr in Oct.	50¢
5 pr in Nov.	@50¢ea.
6 pr in Dec.	@50¢ea.

(two pr were 55¢ea.)

The entries are no proof of apron front overalls, however, while renovating the attic of the Bishop Hill hospital, built in 1855, a pair of apron front overalls were found stuffed in the wall. Apparently they had been adapted for use as an apron; because the inseam had been opened and resewn, changing the front leg seam to a straight center front seam. The length of leg below the knees, the buttons, and the straps are missing (**Fig. 5**).

What remains intact is the apron front, cut in one with the trousers, the position of the fly, the button, and buttonhole fabric reinforcements at the waist and top of the apron front, the side placket and the center back seam. The straps could have been leather and therefore removable as they are on an early apron in the Bishop Hill Heritage Association collection.

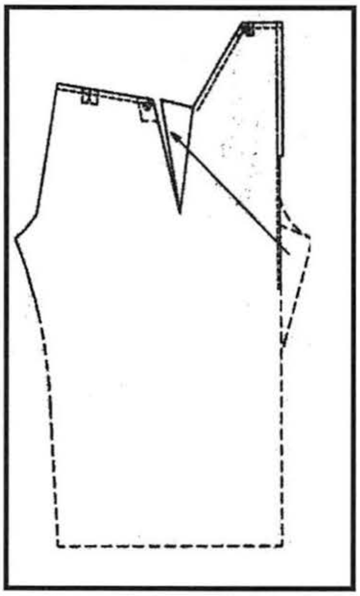

Fig. 5: The dashed lines at the fork and legs are a reconstruction. The location of this garment is presently unknown.

It was not unusual to pick apart a worn garment and reuse the pieces. In 1844 Mary Walker wrote in her diary, "Pieced together a pair of pantaloons for a rug."

Ready-Made Overall Newspaper Ads

Newspaper advertisements are a rich source for ready-made overalls. Unfortunately the newspapers do not always indicate whether they are advertising apron front overalls or overall pants.

The New York Reformer, an "Independent Family Paper, Devoted to Temperance, Education, Choice Literature, The Family Circle, and the General News of the Day," published in Watertown, NY, carried this ad in January of 1851:

Live and Let Live Clothing Store. *AS WE EXPECTED! - CLARK & WIGGINS* have received at their justly celebrated Live and Let Live Clothing Warehouse, the first arrival of a new splended assortment of Cloths,... They are now manufacturing them into Ready-Made Clothing with all the rapidity that their making facilities will warrant. At their extensive

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> sale rooms may be found over 10, 000 garments, consisting in part of... Overalls,...

From the *Daily Alta California*, of San Francisco, Dewitt & Harrison advertise in April of 1851, "2 cases denim overalls."
Denim was still the fabric of choice twenty-one years later. *In Scissors and Yardstick; or All About Dry Goods,* authored by C.M. Brown and F.W. Jacqua in Hartford, Connecticut in 1872 demin was "A heavy, twilled cotton fabric, usually colored an indigo blue, but often brown. It is used principally for overalls, etc."

In July of 1851, Wm. G. Badger advertised in *The Daily Alta California* that he had:

> **JUST RECEIVED-Per** barques Lady Suffolk, Tartar and ship Pactolus: 100 doz. striped shirts; 100 doz. overalls; Together with the largest assortment of ready made clothing ever offered in California.

Ready-Made Overalls Sold From Catalogs: Fabric and India Rubber

In 1848, G.W. Simmons of Boston, Massachusetts, advertised overalls on page 7 of its catalog under, "LABORING MEN, MECHANICS, TEAM-STERS, &C." both, "Overalls & Overall Pants, 37 to 50¢." We conjecture that the "Overalls" are the type with a chest piece.

Reed, Brothers & Co. Clothiers and Importers of Dry Goods in Philadelphia, PA advertised but did not illustrate overalls in its 1853 catalog, "India Rubber Goods, Overalls 1.75 to 2.00." Only one year later, in 1854, the *North American Gutta Percha Company,* doing business from New York, advertised and illustrated "vulcanized gutta percha fabric" apron front overalls as, "Made similar to pants, with front piece covering the chest, coated on heavy and medium fabrics: a good article for provision packers, butchers, fishermen, &c. Price, 24 to $36 per doz." **(Fig. 6).**

Two years later, in 1856, the *Geo. N. Davis and Bro's Catalogue* of Boston used the same copy to advertise their "India rubber overalls both vulcanized and solarized." The catalog was larger than the North American Gutta Percha Company catalog and much improved by the addition of fine drawings of men wearing India rubber clothing **(Fig. 7).**

The same drawing appeared in 1858 in *The Union India Rubber Co.* catalog. Located at 41 John Street in New York City, they claimed they, "

> ARE THE EXCLUSIVE MANUFACTURERS UNDER GOODYEAR'S PATENT."
> **OVERALLS**
> Made similar to pants, with front piece, covering the chest; coated on heavy and medium fabrics; a good article for Provision Packers/Butchers, Fishermen, &c.
> Sizes.-1,2,3.
> **PRICES.**
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Black, Vulcanized, | ......3.00 each |
> | White, " | ....350 " |
> | Lustre, " | ....2.63 " |

The same illustrations were used in the Bart & Hickcox *Illustrated and Descriptive Catalogue and Trade-Price List of India Rubber and Gutta Percha Goods* printed in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1860.

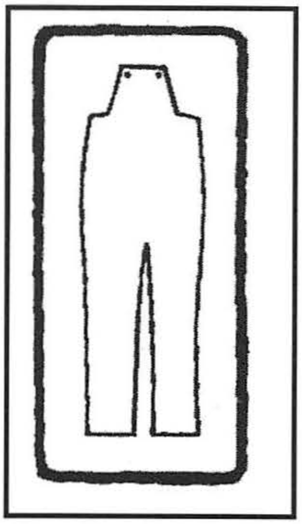
Fig. 6: Overalls with a chest piece advertised in the 1854 North American Gutta Percha Company Catalog.

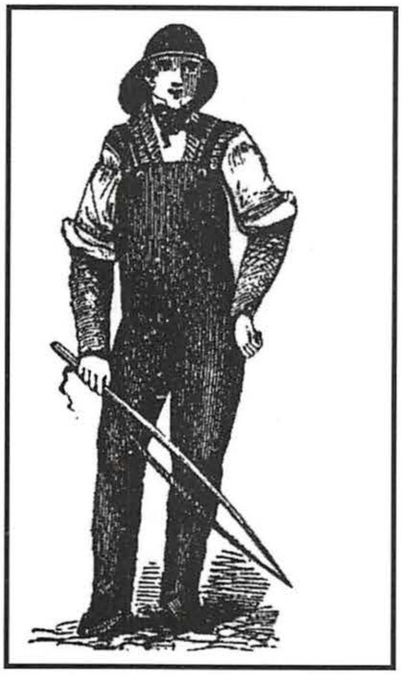
Fig. 7: Illustration of overalls used in gutta percha and rubber company catalogues between 1856 and at least 1860.

Patent and Probate Records

In her dissertation, "The Development and Use of Bib Overalls in the United States, 1856-1945," Ann Revenaugh Hemken lists the earliest patent records she found:

> Eli Stacy and John Stacy ... (Patent No. 125,994; 23 April 1872); Emil Weil ... (Patent No. 143,947; 21 October 1873); Henry Woodward ... (Patent No. 153,292; 21 July 1874).

Probate records sometimes inventoried clothing. In the October 23, 1861 probate records of the Stratford, Connecticut Historical Society Daniel L. Thompson's personal effects are listed. Among the clothing is "1 pair of overall pants .20" and "1 pair of overalls .50."

U.S. Army Apron Overalls

The United States Army issued specialized garments to protect soldiers' uniforms when they were engaged in manual labor, and by the 1850s these included bib front overalls for Engineer troops. Shortly after the War of 1812, fatigue trousers were provided to most soldiers for wear over their uniform pantaloons. Made of 7/8 cotton drilling and fastening with 10 buttons, these loose garments were cheaper to produce than pantaloons. The Military Board of 1832, however, recommended that they be dropped from issue. Not until the War with Mexico would protective overalls be again mentioned in regulations.

The Corps of Engineers, a small but elite body of men responsible for building fortifications and military roads, was provided with a garment described in General Orders Number 18 of the Adjutant General's Office, dated June 4, 1846 as "Canvas Overalls, to be drawn over the other trousers for working in." With the major change in uniforms brought about in General Orders Number 31 of 1851, bib front overalls received the description they would retain through the 1872 Regulations:

> CANVASS OVERALLS FOR ENGINEER SOLDIERS— of white cotton; one garment to cover the whole of the body below the waist, the breast, the shoulders and the arms; sleeves loose, to allow a free play of the arms, with narrow wristband buttoning with one button; overalls to fasten at the neck behind with two buttons, and at the waist behind with buckle and tongue.

While sleeve coverings were clearly intended, there is no photographic evidence that the apron overalls issued to soldiers during the Civil War or later ever had them. Several photographs of Engineer troops building pontoon bridges show hundreds of identical bib front, white canvas overalls with cross straps behind (Fig. 8).

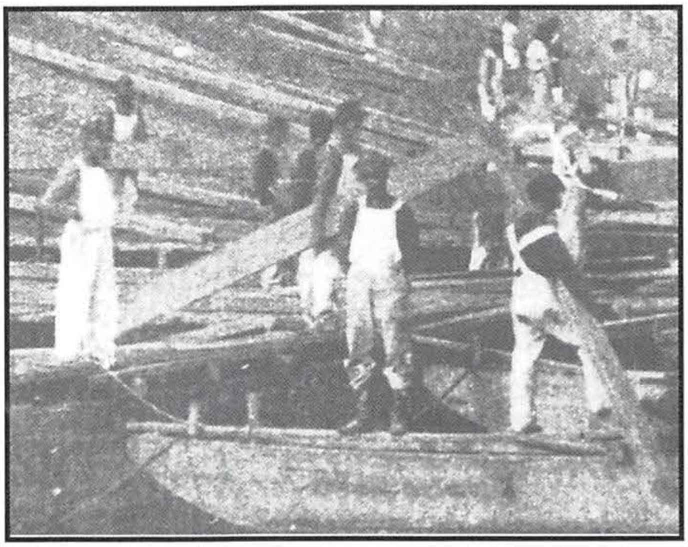

Fig. 8: Soldiers on a pontoon who appear to be wearing apron overalls like those described in the galley proofs of the 1865 Quartermaster Manual. *Credited to Massachusetts Commandery Military Order of the Loyal Legion and the U.S. Army Military History Institute.*

Detailed specifications for these overalls are provided in the never published 1865 *Quartermaster Manual* prepared by Assistant Quartermaster General Colonel George H. Crossman.

> *Overalls:—2* 7/8 yards of 8 ounce cotton or pure linen duck, 28 1/2 inches wide; 4 white metal suspender buttons; 51/2 skeins of No. 30 W.B. linen thread; seams to be all *"felled."*

FATIGUE OVERALLS TOR ENGINEERS.—SIZES.

No. 1.	No. 2.	No. 3.	No. 4.
Length of overalls.	45 *112* in.	47 1/2	48 *IK*
do. teg, 31	32	33	34
do. apron, 14		14 1/2 "	141/2
Width of waist,	40	42	44
do. bottom, 20	21 1/2 "	221/2	23
do. apron at top, 10	10	101/2 '	11 1/2 '
do. apron at bottom,	16	15	16
do. strap, 2	21/2 "	21/2	
Length of strap,	25	25	25

The table of body sizes and specifications accompanyed the galley proofs of the 1865 *Quartermaster Manual.*

The Secretary of War reported that in 1867 there were some 31,235 sets of canvas overalls on hand at the various clothing depots and arsenals. These surplus garments were to serve Engineer troops for several years until expended. Although the 1872 Regulations still described a coverall-type garment, by 1875, a rear-opening separate top which buttoned to the same stable trousers worn by artillery and cavalry troops was considered standard for Engineers.

A Brief Look from 1873 to 1902

By the 1870s, one-piece apron-front overalls appear regularly in periodicals and clothing pattern catalogs. *Prang's Aids for Teaching Trades and Occupations,* published in Boston in 1874 and 1875, illustrates gardeners, haymakers and carpenters wearing apron front overalls. *E. Butterick* & Co.'s *Catalogue for Summer 1873* sold pattern #2746 as "Gent's Overalls, with Apron Front. Waist Measures, 28 to 50 inches. 23 sizes; 25 cents each." Nine years later, in 1882, the same #2746 pattern was offered as, "Mens' Overalls, with Apron Front: 23 sizes. Waist measures, 28 to 50 inches. Any size, 25 cents." In *Butterick's Metropolitan Fashions for Autumn and Winter of 1884-1885,* the same pattern is given a new number and a new description but is still 25 cents (Fig. 9):

> Garments of the description here represented may be made of denim, linen, duck or stout cotton goods of any description; and a pocket may be inserted at one or both sides, according to the needs of the wearer. The pattern is in 23 sizes for men from 28 to 50 inches, waist measure, it requires 4 yards or 3 1/8 yards of 36 inches wide.

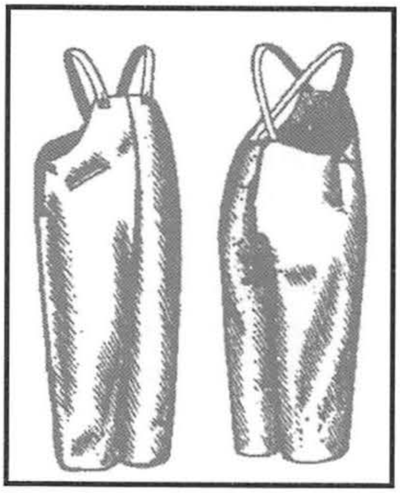

Fig. 9: Pattern #2746 (front & back) from E. Butterick & Co.'s Catalogue, *Summer 1873 and Summer 1882.*

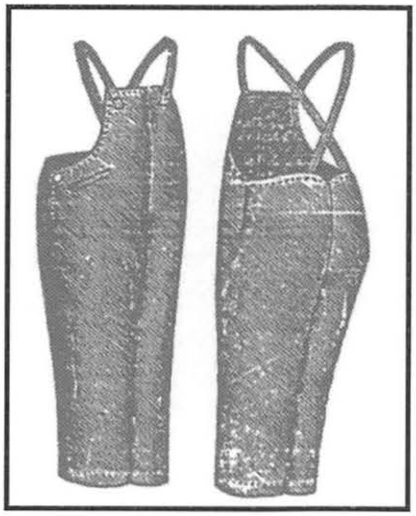

Fig. 10: Apron front overalls in the 1888, 1897 & 1901 Book of Diagrams. *From the 1897 edition in Past Pattern's collections.*

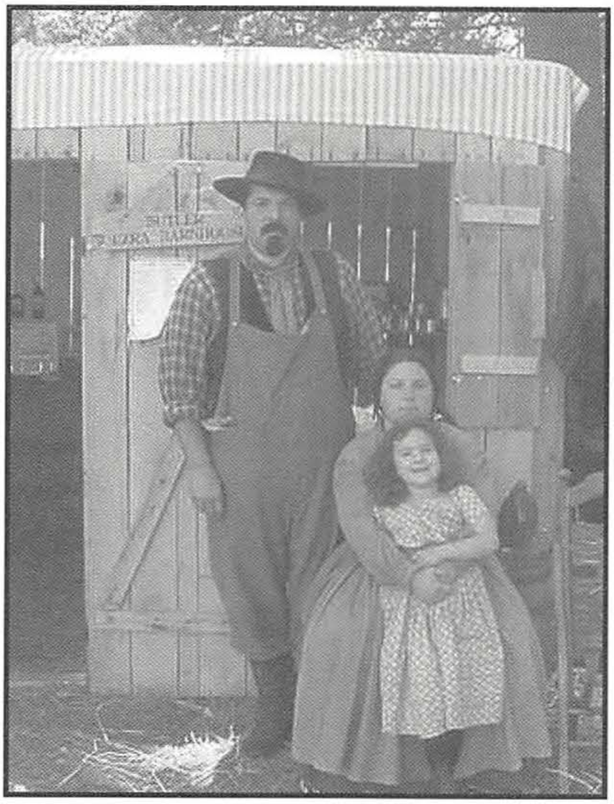

Fig. 11: MOMCC President Rick Musselman decked out in his overalls.

Price of pattern, 1s. or 25 cents.

Past Patterns' apron front overalls pattern is drafted from a diagram titled "Men's Overalls, with Apron" featured in the 1897 edition of *The Diamond Garment Cutter. The Diamond Garment Cutter* is a "Book of Diagrams" consisting of proportional pattern drafts for the home and professional seamstress. Beginning with *The National Garment Cutter* in 1884, W.H. Goldsberry, in partnership with Doran and Nelson, published books of diagrams annually from their headquarters in Chicago, Illinois. In 1895 the name was changed to *The Diamond Garment Cutter* of which Past Patterns has the 1885, 1886, 1893, 1895, 1897 and 1901 editions. I have found an early draft of this same pattern in an 1888 edition of *The Diamond Garment Cutter,* the latest is in a 1901 edition.

"BLUE CARPENTER APRON OVERALL" was advertised in the 1902 *Edition of the Sears, Roebuck Catalog.* It is described as:

> **Made from 7 ounce blue washable denim;**
> double sewed throughout at all vital parts; large apron; elastic end suspenders; patent buttons; one rule pocket; one front and one back pocket.
> **No. 41R716 Per Pair.....................50¢**
> **No. 41R718 Carpenter overalls,** same as No. **41R716** above, only the material is 8-ounce black duck. This overalls is warranted in every particular.
> Price, per pair.................................50¢
> **Everett Apron Overall.**
> **Made from the same material as plain overalls,** from the Everett gray and black striped denim. **This is a very popular overalls;** cut full size; large apron, extra rule pocket; double sewed throughout; suspenders of same material with 6-inch elastic ends.
> **No. 41R720** Price, per pair............50¢
> **Plain White Duck Overalls.**
> **No. 41R722** Men's White Duck Overalls, used by painters and paper hangers.
> Price, per pair............................40¢
> **No. 41R724 Same as No. 41R722,** only made with apron and suspenders. Price, per pair........................40¢
> **Miners' Overalls, made from 10-ounce white drill duck,** regulation miners' overalls, double sewed, well made throughout.
> **No. 41R726** Price, per pair..........70¢

Bibs 1856 through 1945

Ann Revenaugh Hemken states in her dissertation, "The Development and Use of Bib Overalls in the United States, 1856-1945":

> A wide bib extends from one side seam of the waistband to the opposite side seam and is wide enough at the top edge so that it might extend from armpit to armpit of the wearer. A narrow bib, on the other hand, is defined as one that does not cover the full width of the waist at the waistline and appears skimpy on the chest of the wearer.
>
> Wide bibs were in use throughout the period [1856-1945?] but narrow bibs were only common for men from the 1870s through the early 1900s. It is safe to say that wide bibs were the

> norm for men after 1920...
>
> ...a high bib...reaches at least to the wearer's armpits and a low bib...appears nipple level or lower. In general, a high bib was most common and was found at all times between 1856 and 1945.
>
> The outer, vertical edges of the bib possessed one of two characteristics: they were either curved or angled from the side seam...the angled type was more common.

Pockets 1856 through 1915

From Ann Revenaugh Hemken's dissertation:

> It was most common to find two pockets on the front of the trousers portion of the overalls. Patch pockets were used throughout the period,... The use of a single pocket, at the left or right front, was also evident for the whole era,...
> In the late 1880s, a rule pocket came into use. In all examples it appeared near the right side seam of the thigh portion of the leg. Another addition to the back of the leg, found after 1890, was a hammer loop, most commonly placed on the left side.
>
> Pockets on the bib were usual after about 1905, the first ones being small patch pockets on the wearer's left side. After 1915, a single pocket might be centered on the bib or there might be two pockets, one on each side of the center. Patentees advocated complex pockets in the 1890s, but these did not become a reality until at least 1915 when they began to appear in advertisements and photographs.

To learn more about American overalls, borrow a copy of Ann Revenaugh Hemken's dissertation, "The Development and Use of Bib Overalls in the United States, 1856-1945," from Iowa State University via Interlibrary Loan. The OCLS no. is 28237316.

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***Saundra Altman** has owned and operated Past Patterns, the historical pattern company devoted to accuracy, since 1979. She often previews liner notes for her patterns in the* Magazine. *This reprint includes only selected illustrations from the original article. For all illustrations, see the original article or the liner notes for Pattern #910 "1870s-1901Apron Overalls," Past Patterns: http://www.pastpatterns.com/*

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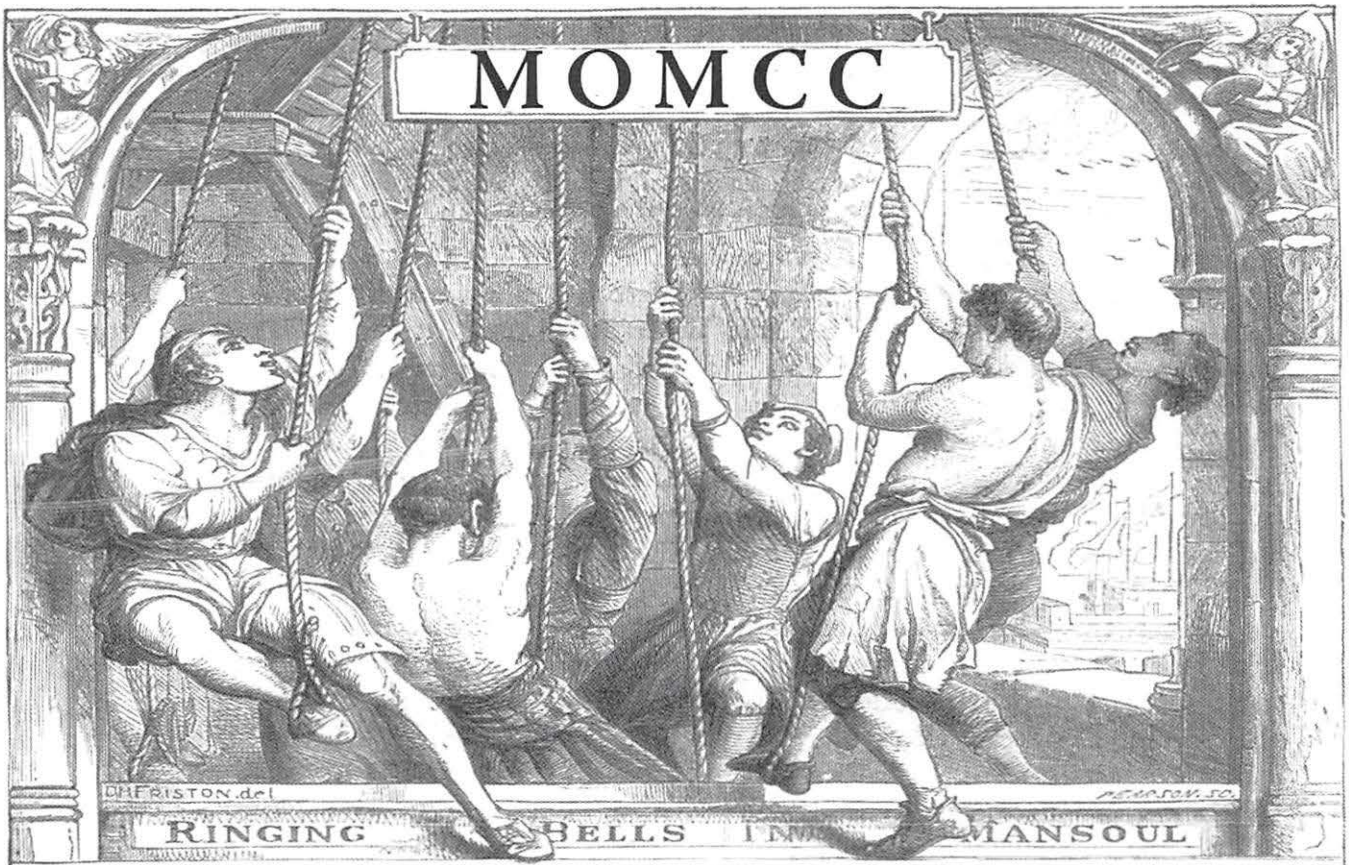

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CALL FOR PAPERS, SESSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS!

MOMCC
Spring
Conference

"Thinking Outside the Box: The Community as a Living History Site."

Deadline for Submissions October 1, 2011

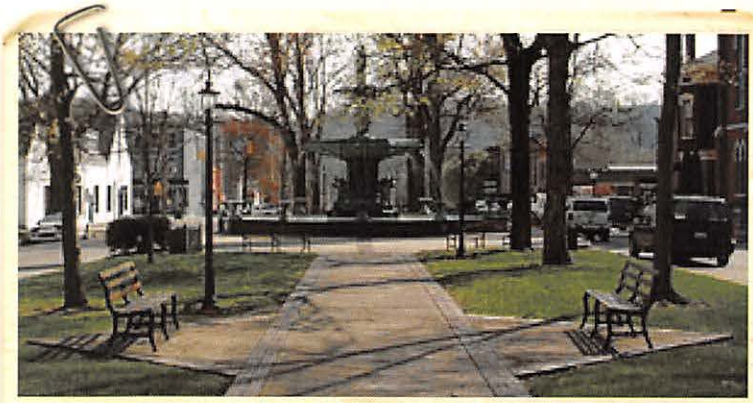
Madison, Indiana
March 8-10, 2012

Most of downtown Madison has been a National Historic Landmark District since 2006. Every year the community is host to people from all over the United States and the world who come to soak in the historical atmosphere.

Please join us as Madison hosts the MOMCC Spring Conference with a focus on expanding the boundaries of living history past the museum's walls. Help us answer the question "What does the community expect from Living History?"

If you have an idea for a session or workshop please send the information requested at **right** to Anne Fairchild: amfairchild@yahoo.com or to

P.O. Box 104 * Madison, IN * 47250



http://visitmadison.org

Requested Information

- Title of Presentation
- Brief Description
- Presenter, Session Chair and/or other participants (please include name, contact info., affiliations, brief biographical sketch or resume to be used in your introduction).
- Format (workshop, paper, panel/roundtable, performance, other)
- Length (1/2 day, workshop full day workshop, 45 min session, 90 min session, multiple sessions).
- Auto-visual Needs: Indicated if you need a laptop, projector or screen for your presentation.

MOMCC FALL CONFERENCE

Old World Wisconsin • Okonomowoc

November DATE HERE, 2010

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